

PABLO NERUDA

---

LET THE RAIL SPLITTER  
AWAKE

*and other poems*

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## A NOTE ON NERUDA

WALT WHITMAN once wrote that the great poet enlisted in a people's cause "can make every word he speaks draw blood." This is true of Pablo Neruda. He is a poet-in-arms. He creates living art in the struggle against a dying society. And the blood he draws is that of an imperialism which hired the executioners of his native Chile and which now threatens to plunge the entire world into a catastrophic war.

As Neruda has said, before the warhawks of Wall Street and Washington can hurl the atom bomb they must first annihilate men morally. That is the mission of *their* poets—the T. S. Eliots and Ezra Pounds who degrade life and stultify the will to resist destruction. To this literature of decay and death Pablo Neruda opposes an art of moral grandeur, an art based on the world-liberating outlook of the working class. His poetry bears the firm signature of his individual genius, but it is not simply as an individual that he battles. His work is infused with the suffering and strength and aspiration of his oppressed people. It has the indestructible fibre of hundreds of millions in the camp of peace and national liberation.

While the dealers in death piously invoke "Western culture," this noblest poet of the Western hemisphere is hunted by their political police. The quisling Gonzalez Videla, who outlawed Neruda, was fittingly rewarded for his contribution to what has indeed become our way of life: Mr. Truman dined the puppet at the White House, the United States

Senate applauded his platitudes, while the copper and nitrate trusts replenished his purse. For our own land there was tragic significance in the hounding of Neruda and the Chilean people by a fascist government taking its orders from North America. It was both a preview and a preparation. Quickly and logically it was followed by the attempt to silence Paul Robeson, the jailing of Howard Fast and the Hollywood Ten, and the McCarran police-state law.

set the  
the situation  
to make  
Good!

Neruda speaks directly to the people of the United States in the title-poem of this volume, and his message has a life or death urgency. For it is more than a plea for peace, more than an appeal to the memory and conscience of Americans. It is a stern warning that our country will suffer the fate of Germany if the drive of the capitalist rulers toward fascism and a war for world conquest is permitted by the people to unfold any further. This is a cry born of love for all that is good on this continent, love for the heritage of Lincoln and Whitman. But we hear also the accents of a determined humanity that is closing ranks against those who push our country to disaster and disgrace.

The man who speaks is rich in the experience of this epoch. Born in 1904, the son of a railroad worker and a school teacher, Neruda wrote his first book of verse, *Crepusculario*, when he was seventeen. After publishing several other volumes, including the neo-romantic *Twenty Love Poems and a Desperate Song*, which won him early renown, Neruda was appointed Chilean consul in Rangoon. He remained in the Far East from 1927 to 1932, visiting China, India, Japan, Java. During 1934 he was assigned to a diplomatic post in Spain, and when the fascists attacked the Republican government he enlisted as a civilian soldier, fighting side by side with the patriotic writers of Spain. A collection of his Spanish War poems, *Spain in the Heart*, published in Chile in 1938, force-

fully expresses his identification with the heroic anti-Franco struggle. This period marked a great change in the poet, who returned to his own country resolved to serve the people as artist and as citizen. Neruda carried on his untiring work against fascism as Chilean consul in Mexico in the early 1940's, during which period he visited the United States.

Upon his return to Chile he threw himself into the political life of the country, was elected senator by the saltpeter mine-workers and shortly afterwards joined the Communist Party. When the people's front government was betrayed by Gonzalez Videla, who outlawed the Communist Party and broke relations with the Soviet Union, Neruda drew up a ringing indictment on the floor of the Senate and declared: "I greet all the Communists of Chile, women and men, persecuted, downtrodden, and I greet them and tell them: Our Party is immortal. It was born in answer to the sufferings of the people and this hounding only exalts it and makes it stronger. . . ." This was at the beginning of 1948. In the years since, Neruda has taken a leading part in the underground fight to liberate Chile. He has been especially active in the world peace movement. He was present at the Peace Congress in Paris in the spring of 1949, where I had the good fortune to meet him, and I shall never forget the tremendous excitement that greeted his appearance on the platform. Several months later he was a leading force at the Continental Peace Congress in Mexico City, where he made the speech, "Our Duty to Life," reprinted in this collection.

Through these crowded years Neruda's evolution as a poet has been remarkable. His actual experience as a Chilean patriot and a Communist fighter in the world anti-fascist struggle impelled him to renounce the bourgeois esthetic influences of his earlier period. He had begun as a brilliant technical innovator, given to pessimism and subjective fantasies. His

development was from detached contemplation to partisanship, from an almost exclusive concentration on form to a primary concern with social content.

Today Neruda is a people's poet. The bourgeois esthetes who were entranced with his earlier work now prefer to ignore a Pablo Neruda who has grown immeasurably. But a worthier audience has multiplied in all lands. The editors of *Masses and Mainstream*—the magazine has in the past two years published most of the material in this collection—can testify to the powerful response to Pablo Neruda among readers in our own country. There is in his poetry such a depth of emotion, such sincerity and truth, that many readers who had long regarded themselves as deaf to the persuasions of poetry have been kindled to new understanding and enthusiasm.

For whoever touches this poetry touches a man, a man of vast human sympathy, a heroic figure who has been able to encompass the deepest strivings of millions. He is by no means oblivious of the pain that a dying capitalism can inflict, but he is above all the poet of the undefeated. We are living, he writes, at humanity's most inspiring hour. This inspiration he finds in the strength of the Soviet Union, "mother of free men," in the great people's victory in China, in the turning toward socialism of the new democracies in Europe. The poetic testament of that inspiration is Neruda's immense *Canto General*, begun in 1937 and published in Mexico City in 1950. "Let the Rail-Splitter Awake," "The Fugitive," "The Heights of Macchu Picchu" are sections of this encyclopedic work which embraces the life of his country and continent in a variety of verse forms. It might well have as its motto these words of Pablo Neruda: "My people shall win. All people shall win." There is the heart of his poetry. There is the heart of our time.

SAMUEL SILLEN

## OUR DUTY TOWARD LIFE

MY COUNTRY, as you know, is the most remote in the Americas. It has been carefully hidden by the Andean mountain chain, by the sea, and by feudalism.

Nevertheless, great powers are paying very close attention to that thin strip of long-suffering land—as in June of this year when two great nations sought to invite two Chileans. The United States government invited the commander-in-chief of the Chilean army. I am not a general; I am just a poet. Yet at that time a great country invited me to visit it. That country was the Soviet Union—and almost at the very moment the Chilean general was en route to get a far-off look at the atom bomb, I was flying to celebrate the anniversary of an old poet, a profound and peace-loving poet: Alexander Pushkin.

It is now some time since the general has returned to my native land. I have not been able to return—among other things, because I am not sure that among the bullets obtained by the general there is not one destined for me. The fact is that since his return to my country warmongering has intensified; and the general, probably doing what he considers

his duty, is writing articles on geopolitics in which he proposes that my far-away land be converted into an arsenal for a war of the continents. It seems to me—and it is well to say it—that that invitation resulted not only in spoken words but also in military bases, and that ships loaded with arms are leaving the big North American ports bound for the countries of the Southern Hemisphere.

And the fact is that shortly after that general's trip and for the first time in many years, the government leaders of Chile resorted to shot and shell—rehearsing perhaps for war, and rehearsing it, of course, against the Chilean people. The blood of about one hundred dead and five hundred wounded stained the streets of the distant Republic. So, as you see, the lessons which the Chilean learned in the company of other military men have been successful; and they have been successful because they have turned the president of my country into a mere lackey maintained in power by the United States mining interests. This servile lackey does not believe in bothering too much about the welfare of the Chilean people.

If I had returned to my country, I would have brought back other stories, other experiences, and different truths. I would have brought the truth of Pushkin and the flag of Pushkin, which is poetry. For he is the *central* poet of his people. Other nations may have forgotten this flag but the Soviet Union, far from forgetting it, has hoisted it over its far-flung land. I saw this flag of poetry, of culture, and of peace floating over its broad expanses. I saw Pushkin museums arising amid the ruins; I saw the poet's face shining, like a surprised angel, in the ancient palaces of the czars, in railway stations, on the wings of airplanes, in the white nights of Leningrad, and in the enormous rebuilt tractor factory of the thousand-times heroic city of Stalingrad. But I also saw the verses of Pushkin in the midst of the fields, in vast checkerboard patterns. Thus,

just as the Soviet Union has reconstructed its cities and factories and its collective well-being, so it has also reconstructed the faces of its creative spirits and displays them for the enjoyment of an entire people.

Perhaps in these two invitations we hold the key to so much of what is happening. We see, on the one hand, that when the Dollar Curtain is lifted by the U.S. immigration authorities, it is in order that Latin American generals may get a close—but not too close—look at the possibilities of mass destruction which a great country is showing off with peculiar pride; and we see, on the other hand, that when we pierce the curtain of slander with which that new world is being surrounded, we are shown the inspiring victory of the human spirit over time and the veneration for a loftly feat of human culture, shared by a whole people.

But we ask ourselves: Does the influence of the armament makers penetrate our lands solely by way of a few mercenary generals?

That is certainly not so. And perhaps never before has history given us a chance to see the process so clearly. The fact is that the war which is being prepared by the monopolies to ensure their domination in our Latin America in the face of the growing threat from the peoples who are struggling for their economic independence—these preparations for a world-wide tragedy seek to hide the extent of the decay. For within this decaying system the creation of culture is showing grave signs of mortal illness.

I SHOULD like to tell you, for the first time, of an important personal decision I have made. I would not bring it before this gathering if it did not seem to me to be closely bound up with these problems. A short time ago, after traveling through the Soviet Union and Poland, I signed a contract in Budapest

for the publication of an anthology of my poetry in the Hungarian language. After signing, I met with the translators and editors. They asked me to pick out, page by page, which poems were to be included in the projected volume. I had seen the thousands of young men and women who had begun to arrive in Hungary from all parts of the earth to take part in the World Youth Festival; I had seen rise up, amid the ruins of Warsaw, the faces of young students who, between classes, were again lifting the shattered pedestal of peace; and I had seen with my own eyes the great buildings built in a few weeks above the ruins of Stalingrad by twenty-five thousand youthful volunteers who had come from Moscow. I heard in those lands a sound like that of bees in an infinite beehive—the sound of pure, collective and boundless joy of the new youth of the world.

That day I glanced through my former books after so many years of not having read them. In the presence of the translators who were waiting for my orders to begin their work, I re-read those pages into which I had put so much energy and care. I saw at once that they were no longer useful. They had grown old; they bore the marks of bitterness of a dead epoch. One by one those pages passed before me in review, and not one of them seemed to me worthy of being given new life. None of those pages had the steel needed for reconstruction; none of my poems brought the health and bread needed by the human beings over there.

So I renounced them. I did not want old sorrows to bring discouragement to new lives. I did not want the reflections of a system which had driven me almost to despair to deposit on the rising towers of hope the terrible slime with which our common enemies had muddied my own youth. I did not give permission for a single one of those poems to be published

in the people's democracies. What is more, today when I have come back to these American lands of which I am a part, I tell you that here too I do not wish to see those poems reprinted. >7

We poets of this age have nourished within ourselves the two opposing forces which produce life. The hour has come when we must choose. It is not merely a question of choosing our mode of behavior; it is a question of choosing our inmost sense of responsibility.

A whole decaying system has spread deadly vapors over the field of culture; and many of us have contributed in good faith to making more unbreathable the air which belongs not only to us but to all men, those living as well as those to come.

How are we going to leave our trace on earth? Like a mark which a suffocating man leaves in desperation in the moistened clay?

Yet it is clear that many of the creative spirits of our time do not realize that what seems to them to be the deepest expression of their being is often deadly poison injected into them by their most implacable enemies.

◀ Dying capitalism is filling the cup of human creation with a bitter brew. We have drunk of this liquid in which all the poisons are mingled. The books of what is called Western culture have, for the most part, been strongly dosed with the drugs of a decaying system. And our youth in Latin America are now drinking the dregs of an epoch which has sought to crush all hope in the future of humanity, replacing it with absolute despair.

When Fadeyev, in his speech at the Wroclaw Congress, said that if hyenas could handle the pen or the typewriter they would write like the poet T. S. Eliot or the novelist Jean-Paul Sartre, I think he was insulting the animal kingdom. I do not

believe that animals endowed with intelligence and communication would make an obscene religion of annihilation and disgusting vices, as do these so-called "masters" of Western culture.

But their role is understandable. They are the apostles of the great charnel-house that is being prepared; they are the active microbes of destruction. Before the monopolists drop the atom bomb and annihilate a large part of the human race in defense of their unjust economic system, these apostles have the task of annihilating men morally. In the chaos of dying capitalism they must make room for deeper anxiety and turn human intelligence into a partial light which illumines only the evil, diseased and perverse sides of human life. Theirs is the task of degrading life in order to facilitate the extermination of man on earth.

THE bourgeoisie has strongly supported these disciples of annihilation. In the last few years we have seen how our snobs have seized upon Kafka and Rilke. They have entered into all the exitless mazes; they have fastened on all the metaphysical systems which have dropped like empty crates from the locomotive of history. They have become defenders of the "spirit," high priests of Americanism, professional muddiers of the waters in which they wallow. They have consigned to oblivion the great humanists of our time. In our Latin America these pigmies blush when mention is made of a Gorky, a Romain Rolland, an Ehrenburg, a Dreiser. These delicate souls cannot utter the name of Balzac. These survivors try to make us believe in a bankrupt and buried surrealism, whereas the only useful thing about that movement is that from its ruins have arisen, like two splendid monuments of reason and faith in man, the two greatest poets of present-day France, the Communists Louis Aragon and Paul Eluard.

Who are the accomplices in the deliberate poisoning of our America? In the intellectual paralysis which is creeping over it? Who are the inciters to suicide of an age that was once able to think? Is it only the *Reader's Digest*? Is it only the guilty silence of the Steinbecks and the Hemingways? To what extent does the blood of the dead circulate in our own veins?

In recent years we have had in our Latin America a phenomenon of extraordinary importance. The arts—particularly painting and literature—have become profoundly concerned with the life and fate of our peoples. Painting—above all the superb Mexican mural painting—has magnificently carried out the mandates of truth and history. Literature, especially the novel, has also drawn near to our peoples but without going beyond a pessimistic realism and a penetrating exposé of our misery. On a few occasions, as in the case of Jorge Amado, José Mancisor or Rómulo Gallegos, this literature, deeply rooted in our peoples, has succeeded in pointing to the path of liberation.

◀ We have created a literature immersed in sorrows and a great many stories which seem destined to show only the insurmountable walls on the people's road. Great writers who are esteemed and profoundly ours, such as Graciliano Ramos of Brazil, Jorge Icaza of Ecuador, Miguel Angel Asturias of Guatemala, Nicodemes Guzmán and Reinaldo Lomboy of Chile, and many others, insist on depicting the dark forest of our America without showing the way out or the light. Yet our people know that road and that light. \* >>

It is our duty as intellectuals to fight against the diseased currents of metaphysics and sensuality which are sapping the foundations of our continent. Our great comrade who is here, Roger Garaudy, has defined these trends as follows: "Skepticism, despair, escape—all attitudes of a dying world. The

trait they have in common is panic in the face of the real and, at the same time, the profound desire not to change anything."

In former days our native romantics, imitating Europe, sang of nightingales which they did not know and spoke of the month of May as our month of spring. Later they seemed a little ridiculous to us. Today this attempt to inject into American veins a poison of disintegration, which we do not accept as an American reality, would be more than ridiculous; it would be disastrous. In our America we have a world to build. We are not shipwrecked souls abandoned on some dark island, but fighters for a rational social order, champions of an unconquerable cause. Hence neither our creations nor our struggles are solitary acts but component parts of a constructive force. In our young continent we refuse to allow the enemies of life and of peace to preach and invoke the old intellectual disciplines of passivity, isolation, suicide and death.

It is well that at this stage of our grim struggle some individuals have arisen from our sorrow-stained earth and have shown in all its immensity the night which has ringed our American homeland.) But now we are in a new period.

We are in the period in which millions of human beings are freeing themselves of feudal bonds and breaking the chains of imperialist slavery. We are at the most inspiring hour of humanity: at the hour when dreams become reality because the struggle of men makes the dreams disappear and reality appear. We are in a period which has seen the Red Army enter the shattered citadel of the Hitlerite assassins and hoist the red flag which symbolizes the age-old hopes of men; we are living through the bright days of the people's democra-

cies. We have the honor and joy of living at a time in which a poet is winning a battle destined to change the fate of hundreds of millions of human beings. The name of that poet is Mao Tse-tung.

We are in a period in which Paul Robeson sings despite the Nazi-minded hoodlums who are trying to silence his song, which is the song of the earth. We are living through days in which the people of Chile—miners, students, fishermen and poets—fight back with sticks and stones and pour out their blood against the dishonor which a traitor has brought to my native land. We are marching together against the values of the merchants of war, against the slanderous poison of a kept press. We, the thousands of men and women who have gathered here on the consecrated earth of Cuahutemoc, Morelos, Zapata and Cárdenas, have come to defend and to impose peace.

This deserves the attention of our creative spirits. I am no critic or essayist; I am just a poet. And it costs me a great deal of effort to speak in words other than those of my poetry. Yet at times I have to speak because others have kept silent. I shall continue to speak while cowardice or indifference has sealed the mouths of many who should be carrying out the duties of their calling. That duty lies in pointing out to what extent the destructive enemy forces who want war are affecting our creations.

We hope for different works on our continent. We must give our American lands the strength, the joy and the youth they do not have. We shall not stand idly by while our treasures are shattered by the warmongers and while those philistines rob us of joy. We must overcome our sorrows and rise above the destruction. We must teach the road and travel that road in the full view of our peoples. We must cleanse that

road and make it resplendent so that tomorrow other human beings may travel over it.

TODAY we have suffered a great loss. We have just buried in the earth, which he loved with all his strength, one of the greatest creators of our America, José Clemente Orozco. His life and death are a lesson to us. We cannot disregard that lesson or let it dissolve in tears. We must bring it to this discussion.

José Clemente Orozco was the artist incarnate of his land and people. His gigantic works will live as long as our America lives. Yet there is in his creations a dramatic intensity which almost borders on terror. The somber greatness of his work will surprise generations to come. The blood and suffering of our America are in his work; in it too are the seeds of insurrection of the past and of the future.

But now that we have lost him, now that his extraordinary and overpowering grandeur has become an indissoluble part of our lives, I should like to point out that José Clemente Orozco's last public statement was his endorsement of this Peace Congress. There has perhaps been no more significant act in any other previous congress. Rising above the totality of his work and above the obscure profundity of his past, and drawing close to the waters of death, José Clemente Orozco looked toward us and sent us his last message. He sent us his hope in us, his confidence in those who are fighting for the peace of the world.

It is this message of a great American who has just been taken from us which we must translate, proclaim, transmit and spread throughout the earth. It is the mandate of our age, the indestructible mandate which survives death. It is our duty toward life.

*(Translated by Joseph M. Bernstein.)*

## LET THE RAIL SPLITTER AWAKE

*“And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven,  
shalt be brought down to hell . . .”*

Matthew 11:23.

### I

WEST of the Colorado river is a place I love.  
I turn towards it, with everything that lives in me,  
with all that I was, and am, and believe.  
There are tall red rocks, made structures  
by the savage air with its thousand hands,  
and the scarlet sky arose from the abyss  
into them to become copper, fire and strength.  
America, stretched like a buffalo hide,  
aerial, clear night of gallop,  
there, towards the starred summits  
I drink your cup of green dew.

Yes, through acrid Arizona and knotty Wisconsin,  
to Milwaukee upraised against wind and snow,  
in the hot swamps of West Palm,  
near the pine groves of Tacoma, in the dense  
steel aroma of your woods,  
I walked upon mother earth,  
blue leaves, stones beneath waterfalls,  
hurricanes trembling like music,

rivers in prayer like monasteries,  
wild geese and apples, land and water,  
infinite stillness wherein the wheat is born.

There, from within my central rock of being  
I could extend my eyes, ears, hands on the air  
until I heard books, engines, snow, struggles,  
factories, graves, plants, footsteps,  
and from Manhattan the moon on a ship,  
the song of the weaving machine,  
the iron spoon that devours earth,  
the drill that strikes like a condor  
and all that oppresses, cuts, sews, runs:  
people and wheels in continuous motion and birth.

I love the farmer's small home. New mothers  
asleep, fragrant as tamarind syrup: freshly ironed cloth:  
fires burning in a thousand homes  
surrounded by onion fields.

(The men when they sing down near the river  
have voices rough as the stones on its bottom:  
tobacco arose from its wide leaves  
and like a fiery goblin entered these homes.)

Come into Missouri, look at its cheese and grain,  
at the fragrant boards red as violins,  
the man navigating a barley-field,  
the newly-broken, blue-black colt  
that scents bread and alfalfa:  
bells, poppies, blacksmiths' forges,  
and in the jumble of sylvan cinemas  
love bares its teeth  
in a dream born of earth.

It is your peace that we love, not your mask.  
Your warrior's face is not handsome.  
You are vast and beautiful, North America.  
Your origin is humble like a washerwoman's,  
white, beside your rivers.  
Shaped in the unknown,  
it is your peace of honeycomb that is most sweet.  
We love your man whose hands are red  
from the clay of Oregon, your Negro son  
who brought you his music born  
in the ivory zones, we love  
your city, your substance,  
your light, your machinery, the energy  
of the West, the tranquil honey  
of apiary and small town,  
the husky boy riding a tractor,  
the oat-fields you inherited  
from Jefferson, the roaring wheel  
that measures out your oceanic territory,  
factory smoke and the kiss number a thousand  
of a new settlement:  
your industrious blood is what we love:  
your worker's hand grimed with oil.

Under the prairie night, since long ago,  
resting on a buffalo hide in grave silence  
are the syllables, the song  
of what I was before being, of what we were.  
Melville is a marine yew-tree, from his branches  
springs a curve of prow, an arm  
of wood and ship. Whitman endless  
as the fields of grain, Poe in his mathematical

twilight, Dreiser, Wolfe,  
fresh wounds in our own absence,  
Lockridge, recently dead, bound to the depths,  
how many others, bound to the shadows,  
while above them burns the same hemispheric dawn  
and of them is made what we are.  
Powerful infants, blind captains,  
amid actions and foliage at times terrifying,  
interrupted by joy and pain,  
beneath prairies traversed by traffic,  
how many dead on plains never before visited:  
tormented innocents, prophets newly published,  
upon the buffalo skins of the prairies.

From France, from Okinawa, from the atolls  
of Leyte (Norman Mailer has recorded it),  
from the furious air and waves, almost all  
the young soldiers have returned.  
Almost all . . . Green and bitter was their story  
of mud and sweat: too rarely did they hear  
the song of coral reefs, perhaps they never touched  
except to die in the islands, the brilliant fragrant  
flowers:

          blood and dung  
pursued them, filth and rats,  
and a weary, desolate, fighting heart.  
But now they have come back, you have received them  
in your open, far-reaching land  
and they have closed up (those who returned)  
like a corolla of innumerable, anonymous petals,  
to be reborn, and to forget.

## II

BUT they found a guest in the house,  
or they brought new eyes (or were blind before)  
or rasping branches tore their eyelids  
or there are new things in the American land.  
Those Negroes who fought with you, hard and smiling,  
look:

men have placed a flaming cross  
in their part of town,  
they have hanged and burned your brother in blood:  
they made him a man of combat, today they deny him  
voice and decision; at night the hooded  
executioners gather, with whip and cross.

(It was another story  
overseas, in battle.)

An unexpected guest  
like an old gnawed octopus, immense and encircling,  
has installed himself in your house, my soldier friend.  
The press exudes the ancient venom, distilled in Berlin,  
magazines (*Time, Newsweek, etc.*) are raucous  
yellow sheets of defamation. Hearst  
who sang a love song to the Nazis, smiles  
and sharpens his claws so that you may go out again  
towards the reefs or the steppes  
to fight for that guest within your house.  
They give you no respite: they want to keep on selling  
steel and bullets, they prepare more gunpowder  
which must be sold quickly, before fresh weapons  
advance grasped by new hands.

Everywhere the bosses now settled  
in your mansion enlarge their falanges,  
they love Franco Spain and offer you a cup of blood:  
(one executed, one hundred): the Marshall cocktail.  
Choose young blood: farmers  
in China, prisoners  
in Spain,  
blood and sweat in the sugar-fields of Cuba,  
tears of the women  
in the coal and copper mines of Chile;  
next, beat it with energy,  
like blows with a truncheon,  
and don't forget the ice cubes and some drops  
from the song "Let us defend Christian culture."  
Is this a bitter mixture?  
You will grow used to it, soldier friend, and drink it.  
At whatever place in the world, in moonlight  
or in the morning, in the luxury hotel,  
ask for this drink that strengthens and refreshes  
and pay for it with a good bill bearing the image of  
Washington.

You have also discovered that Charles Chaplin,  
last father of tenderness in the world,  
is defamed, and that the writers (Howard Fast and others)  
the scientists and the artists  
of your country  
must submit to being judged for "Un-American" thoughts  
before a tribunal of merchants enriched by the war.  
To the remotest corner of the world fear has come.  
My aunt reads this news and is frightened,  
all the eyes on earth watch

these courts of shame and vengeance.  
This is the justice of blood-stained Babbitts,  
of the slaveholders, the assassins of Lincoln,  
it is the new Inquisition which now arises  
not for the cross (even that was horrible, inexplicable),  
but for the round gold which rings  
on the tables of whorehouses and banks  
and which has no right to judge.

Morinigo, Trujillo, Gonzalez Videla,  
Somoza, Dutra, joined forces in Bogotá, and applauded.  
You, young American, do not know them, they are  
the somber vampires of *our* skies, bitter  
is the shadow of their wings:

prisons,  
martyrdom, death, hatred: the southern countries  
with their petroleum and nitrate  
have conceived monsters.

In Chile, in the night,  
the hangman's order arrives at the humble, damp  
house of the miner. The children  
awake crying.

Thousands are in jail,  
are thinking.

In Paraguay  
the deep forest shade hides  
the bones of a murdered patriot, a shot  
sounds  
in the phosphorescence of summer.

Truth  
died there.

In Santo Domingo why didn't

Mr. Vandenberg, Mr. Armour, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Hearst  
intervene to defend the West?

Tormented, aroused in the night, why was  
the President of Nicaragua driven to flight,  
to death in exile?

(Bananas must be defended there, not liberties,  
and Somoza will suffice for this.)

These great  
victorious ideas penetrate Greece and China  
to aid governments stained like dirty carpets.

Ah, Soldier!

### III

I ALSO go beyond your lands, America,  
there I make my wandering home, flying, traveling, singing  
and conversing throughout the days.

And in Asia, in the U.S.S.R., in the Urals I pause  
and expand my soul permeated with solitude and resin.

I love whatever man has created in space  
by blow of struggle and love.

My house in the Urals is still surrounded  
by the ancient night of pines  
and silence like a tall beehive.

Here, wheat and steel  
were born from the hand of man, from his breast.  
And singing of hammers enlivens the aged woods  
like a blue phenomenon.

From here I look across wide regions of man,  
a geography of children and women, of factories,  
love and songs, of schools  
which gleam like violets in the forest

where the wild fox lived until yesterday.  
From this point my hand, as if across a map,  
traces the green of meadows, the smoke  
of a thousand workshops, the smell  
of textiles, the marvel  
of harnessed energy.  
In the afternoons I return  
along new, freshly-laid roads  
and enter kitchens  
where cabbage is boiling, and from where  
a new spring will flow for the world.

Here too the young men returned  
but many millions were left behind,  
swollen, hanging from gallows,  
burned in special ovens,  
destroyed so that nothing remains  
but their names in the memory.  
Their villages too were murdered:  
the Soviet earth was murdered:  
millions of glass bits and bones were mingled,  
cattle and factories, even Spring disappeared  
swallowed up by the war.  
Even so, the young men returned.  
And love for the country they had built  
was merged in them with so much blood  
that they speak *My Land* with their veins,  
Soviet Union they sing with their blood.  
The voice of the invaders from Berlin  
still echoed loudly when they returned  
to help the cities, animals and Spring  
in their rebirth.

Walt Whitman, lift up your grassy beard,  
look with me from this wood,  
from these fragrant heights,  
what do you see, Walt Whitman?  
I see, my wise brother tells me,  
how factories are working in that city  
remembered by the dead,  
in pure resplendent Stalingrad.  
I see how from the embattled plains,  
from the suffering and the flames,  
in the humid morning there is born  
a tractor which clanks towards the fields.  
Give me your voice and the strength of your buried breast,  
Walt Whitman, and the solemn roots that are your face  
so as to sing of these reconstructions!  
Together we will pay homage to what arises  
from all the grief, to what surges up  
from the deep silence, from the somber  
victory.

Stalingrad, your steel voice emerges,  
floor by floor hope is rebuilt  
like a collective house  
and again a deep vibration is on march  
teaching  
singing  
building.

Stalingrad emerges from blood  
like an orchestra of water, stone and iron,  
and bread is reborn in the bakeries,  
Spring in the schools, the wind climbs  
new scaffoldings, new trees,  
while the stern old Volga throbs quietly.

These books  
in fresh shelves of pine and cedar  
reunite above the graves  
of dead hangmen,  
these theatres built among ruins  
cover martyrdom and resistance:  
books clear as monuments:  
one book over every hero  
over every millimeter of death  
over every petal of this immutable glory.

Soviet Union, if we could gather up  
all the blood spilled in your struggles,  
all you gave as a mother to the world  
so that freedom, dying, might live,  
we would have a new ocean  
larger than any other  
deeper than any other  
vibrant as all rivers  
active as the fire of Araucanian volcanoes.  
Sink your hand into this sea,  
man of every nation,  
then withdraw and drown in it  
all that has forgotten, outraged,  
lied and stained,  
all that joined the hundred small curs  
of the Western dump-heap  
and insulted your blood,  
Mother of free men!

From the fragrant Ural pines  
I watch the library which is being born

in the heart of Russia,  
the laboratory in which silence itself works,  
I watch trains carrying lumber and songs  
to new cities,  
and in this balsamic peace a beat starts  
as if in a new breast,  
girls and doves return to the steppe  
disturbing its whiteness,  
orange trees become peopled with gold,  
now, at each dawn  
the market-place has a new aroma,  
a new aroma which arrives from the high lands  
where martyrdom was greater,  
the map of plains trembles  
with engineers writing their numbers,  
and aqueducts twist like long serpents  
across the earth of a new misty winter.

Within three rooms of the ancient Kremlin  
lives a man named Joseph Stalin.  
The light goes out late in his room.  
The world and his country give him no rest.  
Other heroes have brought a country into being;  
beyond this, he helped to conceive his  
and construct it  
and defend it.  
His immense land, therefore, is part of himself  
and he cannot rest because she does not.  
In other times snow and gunpowder  
found him facing the old bandits  
who wished (as again now) to revive  
the knout and misery, the anguish of serfs,

the dormant pain of millions of poor.  
He was against the Wrangels and Denikins  
sent by the West to "defend culture."  
They were stripped of their hides there, those  
defenders of the hangmen, and throughout the wide  
lands of the U.S.S.R. Stalin worked day and night.  
But later in a leaden wave came  
the Germans fattened up by Chamberlain.  
Stalin confronted them at all the vast frontiers,  
in all their retreats, in all their advances,  
and as far as Berlin, like a hurricane of people  
his sons arrived, bringing the broad peace of Russia.

Molotov and Voroshilov are there,  
I see them with the others, the high generals,  
the indomitable ones.  
Firm as snow-covered oak-groves.  
None of them has palaces.  
None of them has regiments of slaves.  
None of them was made wealthy by the war,  
by selling blood.  
None of them like a peacock  
travels to Rio de Janeiro or Bogotá  
to command petty satraps, blood-stained torturers.  
None of them has two hundred suits,  
none of them owns shares in armament factories,  
and all of them own shares  
in the joy and construction  
of that immense country where dawn resounds  
arising from the night of death.

They said "comrade" to the world.

They made the carpenter king.  
No camel shall pass through this needle's eye.  
They cleansed the villages.  
Divided the land.  
Elevated the serf.  
Eliminated the beggar.  
Annihilated the cruel.  
Brought light into the deep night.

Because of this, Arkansas boy, or rather  
you, gilded youth of West Point, or better  
you, Detroit mechanic, or instead  
you, stevedore of old New Orleans, to all of you  
I speak and say this: walk firmly,  
open your ear to the vast human world,  
it is not the elegant gentlemen of the State Department  
nor the ferocious steel barons who are  
speaking to you  
but a poet from the extreme south of America  
son of a railroad worker from Patagonia,  
American as the Andean air,  
today a fugitive from a country wherein  
prison, torture, and anguish rule,  
while copper and oil gradually transform  
into gold for the foreign lords.

You are not the idol  
who carries gold in one hand  
and in his other the Bomb.

You are  
what I am, what I was, what we must  
protect, the fraternal sub-soil  
of pure America, the simple

men of streets and roadways.  
My brother Juan sells shoes  
just like your brother John,  
my sister Juana peels potatoes  
just like your cousin Jane,  
and my blood is of miners and sailors  
like your blood, Peter.  
You and I will open doors  
so that the Ural air will blow  
through the curtains of ink,  
you and I will tell the infuriated:  
“My dear fellow, just this far and no further,”  
for beyond, the land belongs to us  
and no whistle of machine-gun will be heard there,  
but a song, another song, and another.

#### IV

BUT IF you arm your hosts, North America,  
to destroy this pure border  
and send the Chicago slaughterer  
to govern the music and order  
which we love,  
    we will emerge from stones and air  
to bite you,  
    we will emerge from the last window  
to fire upon you,  
    we will emerge from the deepest waves  
to stab you with thorns,  
    we will emerge from the furrows so that the seed  
can smash like a Colombian fist,

we will emerge to deny you bread and water,  
we will emerge to burn you in hell.

Don't set foot in gentle France then, soldier,  
for we will be there to see that the green vines  
shall give vinegar and the poor girls  
shall point out to you the spot  
where German blood is still fresh.  
Don't climb the dry mountain ranges of Spain  
for every rock will turn into flame,  
and there the valiant fight for a thousand years:  
don't get lost among the olive trees  
for you will never return to Oklahoma, and don't enter  
Greece, because even the blood you are shedding there today  
will rise up and stop you.  
Don't come fishing in Tocopilla  
Because the sword-fish will know of your plunder  
and the obscure miner from Araucania  
will seek out the ancient cruel arrows  
buried and awaiting new conquistadors.  
Don't trust the gaucho singing his *vidalita*  
nor the packinghouse workers, they  
will be everywhere with eyes and fists,  
like the Venezuelans who will wait for you  
a bottle of petroleum in one hand, in the other a guitar.  
Do not enter Nicaragua either,  
Sandino sleeps in the forest until your coming,  
his rifle covered with lianas and rain,  
his face without eyelids,  
but the wounds where you killed him are alive  
like the hands of Puerto Rico which wait  
for the light of knives.

The world will be implacable towards you.  
Not only will the islands be deserted but also the air  
which now hears words that it loves.

Don't dare demand manflesh  
from lofty Peru: in the ragged mist of ruins  
our blood's gentle ancestors sharpen their  
amethyst swords against you, and in the valleys  
sound the hoarse conch-shells of battle, calling  
together warriors with their slings, the sons  
of Amarú. Nor along the Mexican sierras  
need you search for men, to bring them into combat  
against the dawn. For the rifles of Zapata are not sleeping,  
they are oiled and aimed at the Texas plains.  
Do not enter Cuba, where in the ocean glare,  
in the sweaty sugar-cane fields,  
one single dark glance awaits you  
and a single cry, until it dies or kills.

Do not advance  
to the Partisan lands in murmurous Italy:  
don't pass beyond the rows of soldiers in slick uniforms  
that you maintain in Rome, don't go past Saint Peter's:  
beyond that the rustic village saints,  
the marine and fishing saints,  
love the great country of steppes  
where the world flowered anew.

Do not approach  
the bridges of Bulgaria, they won't let you pass;  
in the rivers of Rumania we will throw boiling blood  
to scald the invaders;  
do not hail the farmer who now knows the tomb  
of his feudal lords, who with his plow

and rifle stands guard, do not look at him  
for he will burn you like a star.

Do not disembark  
in China: Chiang the mercenary will not be there:  
but awaiting you will be a forest of farmers'  
sickles and a volcano of gunpowder.

In other wars there were ditches filled with water,  
then endless barbed wire with prongs and claws,  
but this ditch is wider, these waters deeper,  
these wires more invincible than any metal.  
They are one and another atom of human metal,  
they are one and a million knots of lives and lives,  
they are the old griefs of the peoples  
of all remote valleys and lands  
of all flags and ships  
of all caves wherein they were piled up  
of all fish-nets with which they strode against tempests  
of all the jagged furrows of the earth  
of all the hells with their fiery cauldrons  
of all looms and foundries  
of all locomotives lost or assembled.  
This wire encircles the world a thousand times:  
it seems divided, uprooted,  
then suddenly it joins magnets  
until it fills the earth.

But even farther on,  
radiant and resolute  
steely, smiling  
ready for song or combat  
there await you

men and women of the tundra and taiga,  
warriors of the Volga who vanquished death,  
children of Stalingrad, giant of the Ukraine,  
all one vast high wall of stone and blood,  
iron and song, courage and hope.  
If you touch this battlement you will fall  
consumed like coal in the factories,  
and the smiles from Rochester will turn into shadows  
that will scatter over the air of the steppes  
to be buried forever in snow.  
There will come the fighters who from Great Peter to new  
heroes  
have astonished the earth,  
and they will make of your medals small cold bullets  
to whistle ceaselessly across the entire  
tremendous land that today is joyous.  
And the vine-covered laboratory  
will also release the unchained atom  
toward your proud cities.

## V

LET none of this happen.  
Let the Rail-splitter awake.  
Let Abe come with his axe  
and his wooden plate  
to eat with the farmers.  
Let his head like tree-bark,  
his eyes like those in wooden-planks  
and oak-tree boles,  
turn to look on the world  
rising above the foliage

higher than the sequoias.  
Let him buy something in a drugstore  
let him take a bus to Tampa  
let him bite into a yellow apple  
and enter a moviehouse to converse  
with all the simple people.

*Let the Rail-splitter awake.*

Let Abe come, let his aged yeast raise  
the green and gold earth of Illinois,  
let him lift up his axe in his own town  
against the new slaveholders  
against the slave-lash  
against the poisoned printing-press  
against the bloodied merchandise  
they want to sell.

Let them march singing and smiling,  
the young white, the young Negro,  
against the walls of gold  
against the manufacturer of hate  
against the merchant of their blood,  
let them sing, laugh and conquer.

*Let the Rail-splitter awake.*

Peace for the twilights to come,  
peace for the bridge, peace for the wine,  
peace for the stanzas which pursue me  
and in my blood uprising entangling  
my earlier songs with earth and loves,  
peace for the city in the morning

when bread wakes up, peace for the Mississippi,  
source of rivers,  
peace for my brother's shirt,  
peace for books like a seal of air,  
peace for the great kolkhoz of Kiev,  
peace for the ashes of those dead  
and of these other dead, peace for the grimy  
iron of Brooklyn, peace for the letter-carrier  
who from house to house goes like the day,  
peace for the choreographer who shouts  
through a funnel to the honeysuckle vine,  
peace for my own right hand  
that wants to write only Rosario,  
peace for the Bolivian, secretive  
as a lump of tin, peace  
so that you may marry, peace for all  
the saw-mills of Bio-Bio,  
peace for the torn heart  
of guerrilla Spain,  
peace for the little museum in Wyoming  
where the most lovely thing  
is a pillow embroidered with a heart,  
peace for the baker and his loaves,  
and peace for the flour, peace  
for all the wheat to be born,  
for all the love which will seek its tasselled shelter,  
peace for all those alive: peace  
for all lands and all waters.

Here I say farewell, I return  
to my house, in my dreams  
I return to Patagonia where

the wind rattles the barns  
and the ocean spatters ice.  
I am nothing more than a poet: I love all of you,  
I wander about the world I love;  
in my country they jail miners  
and soldiers give orders to judges.  
But I love even the roots  
in my small cold country,  
if I had to die a thousand times over  
it is there I would die,  
if I had to be born a thousand times over  
it is there I would be born  
near the tall wild pines  
the tempestuous south wind  
the newly-purchased bells.  
Let none think of me.  
Let us think of the entire earth  
and pound the table with love.  
I don't want blood again  
to saturate bread, beans, music:  
I wish they would come with me:  
the miner, the little girl,  
the lawyer, the seaman,  
the doll-maker,  
to go into a movie and come out  
to drink the reddest wine.  
I did not come to solve anything.  
I came here to sing  
and for you to sing with me.

From somewhere in the Americas, May, 1948.  
(*Translated by Waldeen.*)

## THE DEAD IN THE SQUARE

### I

I DO NOT come to weep here where they fell.  
I come to speak to you who are still living;  
I address my words to you, and to myself.

Others have died before. Remember? Yes, you remember  
others like these, like you, with the same surnames.

In rainy Lonquimay, in San Gregorio,  
in barren Ranquil, scored by the spendthrift wind,  
in Iquique choked and half-buried by drifting sand,  
along the edge of the sea and the edge of the desert,  
following the smoke line and the rain line,  
from the high pampas down to the archipelagos,  
other men have been murdered,  
others with names like Antonio, like your name,  
fishermen, blacksmiths, people with jobs like yours:

bone and breed of Chile: faces  
scarred by wind-lash, gaunt

as the pampas, wearing  
the signature of pain.

## II

ALL along the ramparts of our fatherland,  
bright at the edge of the blank glass-glitter of snow,  
hidden behind the maze of the green-branched river,  
under the nitrate, under the fuse of the bursting seed,  
I found thick-strewn the drops of my people's blood.  
And each drop burned like fire.

## III

UP TO that time the blood had been always hidden under the  
roots, always washed off and forgotten;  
(it was so far away) the rain from the South had soaked it  
into the earth  
(it was so long ago), or the nitre had eaten it up when it fell  
on the pampas.  
And the death of the people was as it always had been:  
as if it were only stones falling  
on stony ground, water spilled into water.  
From North to South, wherever the dead  
were burned or ground to bits,  
they were buried in utter darkness;  
or piled up in a dense pyramid;  
they were burned in the dead of night and in silence  
and their ashes flung to the sea.  
No one knows where they are: they have no tomb:  
the deep roots of the nation have entangled  
their martyred fingers, their exploded hearts.

O laughter of Chile, steadfast soul of the pampas,  
voices out of the silence: no man living knows  
where your murderers hid you from memory.  
But on that day when the nation is resurrected  
you will leap from the earth to recover your lost blood.

#### IV

THIS crime took place right in the open Square.  
Not in a forest was the innocent blood spilled,  
not in the thirsty concealing sand of the pampas.  
No one made any attempt to cover it up.  
This crime was done in the very heart of the country.

#### V

Once I was in the nitre beds with the unknown heroes  
who dig that powdery fertilizing snow  
from the hard crust of our planet;  
I was there with those men at the time of the great strike;  
I remember the proud hard clasp of their earthy hands.  
They said to me, "Look, brother,  
look how we live  
here in Humberstone, here in Mapocho,  
in Ricaventura, in Paloma,  
in Pan de Azucar, in Piojillo."  
They let me gnaw at the miserable roots  
that give them all the nourishment they get;  
they showed me the packed earth that is floor for their houses,  
the heat, the dirt, the bedbugs,  
and the endless solitude that is their life.  
And I saw the diggers sweating at their work

and how they leave the full print of their hands  
pressed in the wooden handles of their picks.

And I heard a voice welling up  
from the dense base of the pyramid  
as if the womb of hell had cried aloud,  
and there lurched forth a creature with no face,  
a foetus like a mask all splattered over  
with sweat and blood and dirt.

And that nameless thing cried to me, saying, "Wherever  
you go, tell of the torment endured  
by those on the bottom, O my brother,  
tell of your brother, whose whole life  
is lived on the rim of hell."

## VI

PEOPLE, here you decided to lend a hand  
to the bowed workers of the pampas; you answered them;  
you called them, man, woman, and child,  
one year ago, to this Square.

And here your blood gushed forth.  
In the very center of the country it was spilled,  
in front of the Palace, right in the middle of the street  
for all the world to see.

And no one could mop it up:  
your red stains remained there  
like stars, fixed and implacable.

It was when one Chilean hand after another  
was stretching out its fingers toward the pampas,  
and your words came from the heart, speaking unity;

people, it was when you were marching in your own Square,  
singing the old songs full of tears and hope and sorrow  
that the hand of the hangman drenched the Square with your  
blood.

## VII

THIS is the way the flag of our country was made:  
out of the rags of their sorrow the people stitched it;  
they embroidered it with the shining thread of love;

they cut from their shirts, or perhaps from a fold of the sky,  
that patch of blue to hold the star of their country,  
and with eager hands they pinned it there like a jewel.

Drop by drop it is turning to fiery red.

## VIII

THIS afternoon I call to them one by one.  
One by one, come back to our memory  
this afternoon in this Square.

Manuel Antonio Lopez,  
faithful comrade;

Lisboa Calderon,  
though others betrayed you,  
we shall march on in your path.

Alejandro Gutierrez,  
the banner that fell beside you  
is rising all over your land;

Cesar Tapia,  
your heart is alive in these banners,  
I hear it beating, beating in the breeze on the Square;

Filomeno Chavez,  
I never shook your hand, but your hand is here:  
not even death can stiffen a clean hand.

Ramona Parra, beautiful  
as a new star in our sky,  
Ramona Parra, delicate heroine,  
flower stained with blood, dear young Ramona,  
girl with the heart of steel, golden-haired fighter,  
by your name, Ramona Parra, we swear to continue the fight  
until your wasted blood flowers in freedom.

## IX

THOSE who came to this Square with loaded rifles,  
those who came with orders to kill without mercy,  
found here only a crowd of people singing—  
a crowd made into a people by duty and love

and a thin girl suddenly fell clutching her banner;  
a youth spun round coughing through the wound in his side;  
in the shock of that silence the people stared at them falling  
and slowly the wave of their sorrow lifted and froze into cold  
fury.

Afterward they dipped their banners into the blood  
and held them up before the faces of the assassins.

## X

IN THE name of these our dead  
I demand punishment.

For those who spattered our fatherland with blood  
I demand punishment.

For him by whose command this crime was done  
I demand punishment.

For the traitor who clambered to power over these bodies  
I demand punishment.

For those forgiving ones who excused this crime  
I demand punishment.

I do not want to shake hands all around and forget;  
I do not want to touch their blood-stained hands;  
I want punishment.

I do not want them sent off somewhere as ambassadors  
nor covered up here at home until it blows over.

I want to see them judged,  
here, in the open air, in this very spot.

I want to see them punished.

## XI

I MUST speak to those dead now as if they were here.  
Brothers: it will go on,

our fight will go on in the land,  
in the factories, in the farms,  
in the streets the fight will go on,  
in the nitre-pits, in the pampas.  
In the craters of copper, glowing with green and red,  
in the dank caves where coal-seams gleam through the dusk,  
the battle-lines will be drawn.  
And in our hearts these banners,  
the witnesses of your death,  
will multiply themselves until they flutter  
thick as the thrusting leaves of inexhaustible spring.

## XII

FOOTSTEPS shuffling a thousand years in this Square  
will not rub off the trace of your blood from these stones;  
though the babble of countless voices cross this quietness  
that bell will echo, tolling the hour of your death;  
though rain may rot these walls to their foundations  
it will not quench the blaze of your martyred names  
nor the dead hand of a thousand nights of oppression  
stifle your living hope for that destined day  
that we throughout the world, so many of us,  
are yearning toward; the final day of suffering,  
the day of justice won through bitter struggle;  
and you, O fallen brothers, out of the silence  
your voices will rise in the mighty shout of freedom  
when the hope of the people flames into paeans of joy.

*(Translated by Robert Brittain.)*

## SONG FOR BOLIVAR

Our father who art in earth,  
in the water, in the air  
of all our wide and silent latitude,  
everything bears your name, father, in our domain.  
Your name the sugarcane raises to sweetness,  
bolivar tin has a Bolivar shine,  
bolivar bird over Bolivar Mountain,  
the potato, saltpeter, the special shadows,  
the currents, the veins of phosphoric stone,  
all that is ours comes from your snuffed-out life:  
your legacy were rivers, plains, and belfries;  
your legacy, father, is our daily bread.

Your little corpse of a gallant captain  
has stretched into immensity its mental shape:  
suddenly your fingers emerge from out the snow,  
the southern fisherman brings suddenly to light  
your smile, your voice palpitating in the nets.

What color the rose we grow beside your soul?  
Red shall the rose be that recalls your step.

How shall the hands be that touch your ashes?  
Red shall the hands be that are born from your ashes.  
And what like the seed of your dead heart?  
Red is the seed of your living heart.

Therefore the circle of hands is about you now.  
Within my hand is another, and another in it,  
and another again, down to the dark continent's end.  
And yet another hand you did not know  
comes also, Bolivar, to clasp your own.

From Teruel, Madrid, Jarama, from the Ebro,  
from the prison, from the air, from the dead of Spain  
comes this red hand, a daughter of your own.

Captain, you fighter, wherever a mouth  
cries Liberty, wherever an ear listens,  
wherever a red soldier smashes a brown helmet,  
wherever a free man's laurel blossoms,  
wherever a new flag decks itself  
with the blood of our illustrious dawn,  
Bolivar, captain, your face can be discerned.  
Again in the dust and smoke your sword is born.  
Again your banner is embroidered with blood.  
Scoundrels attack your seed anew;  
nailed to another cross is the son of man.

But still your shadow leads us towards hope:  
the laurel and light of your red army  
gazes with your gaze across the American night.  
Your eyes that watch beyond the seas,  
beyond the oppressed and wounded peoples,

beyond the black burning cities,  
your voice is born anew, your hand is born again,  
your army defends the consecrated flags,  
and a terrible sound of grief precedes  
the dawn that's reddened by the blood of man.

Liberator, a world of peace was born in your arms.  
Peace, bread and wheat were things born of your blood:  
From our young blood that comes from your blood,  
peace will grow, bread and wheat for the world that will be  
ours.

I met Bolivar one fine long morning  
in Madrid, in the mouth of the Fifth Regiment.  
Father, I said, are you or are you not, or who are you?  
And looking towards the Cuartel de la Montana, he said:  
I wake up every hundred years when the people awaken.

*(Translated by A. L. Lloyd.)*

## THE FUGITIVE

### I

THROUGH the tall night, through all of life,  
from tears to paper, clothes to clothes,  
I wandered in those oppressive days.  
Fugitive from the police,  
in the hour of clarity, the denseness  
of solitary stars, I passed through cities,  
woods, small farms, ports,  
from the door of one human being  
to another, from the hand of one being  
to another, and another.  
Night is somber, but man provides  
his brotherly signals;  
blindly I was led by roads and shadows  
up to the lighted door, to the small  
star-point that was mine, to  
the scrap of bread in the forest  
that wolves had not yet devoured.

One night I came to a house

in open fields, and before then  
no one had seen or even surmised  
about those lives.

All that they did, their hours,  
were new knowledge to me.  
I entered, they were a family of five:  
all had risen as if awakened  
by a fire in the heart of night.

I took one hand  
then another, I saw one face  
then another, and they told me  
nothing: they were doors I had never glanced  
at in the street, eyes that did not  
recognize my face, and  
in the high, newly arrived night  
I stretched out my weariness,  
to hold the grievous vigil of my land.

While waiting sleep, earth  
with its numerous echoes,  
its hoarse clamor and tendrils  
of solitude, continued the night,  
and I thought: "Where am I?  
Who are they? Why do they take care of me  
today? Why do they, who never saw  
me until now, open to me their door  
and protect my song?"  
No one replied,  
except the murmurs of a leaf-stripped  
night, fabric knitted by crickets;  
the whole night seemed to tremble  
lightly in its foliage.

Nocturnal earth at my window  
you brought me your lips  
so that I might sleep gently  
as if falling upon thousands of leaves,  
from season to season, nest  
to nest, from branch to branch  
until soon I would lie asleep,  
at rest like the dead among your roots.

## II

It was autumn in the vineyard.  
The innumerable grapevines quivered.  
Their veiled white clusters  
wore frost on sweet fingers,  
and the black grapes filled  
their small taut udders from  
some secret circular river.  
The master of the house, lean-faced  
artisan, read to me from this pale  
earthy book of twilit days.  
His kindness knew every fruit  
every trunk, the way to prune  
and leave the tree its bare  
goblet form.  
He spoke to his horses  
as if to enormous children,  
the dogs and five cats of his household  
followed him about,  
some arched and slow,  
others running wildly  
beneath cold peach-trees.

He knew every branch,  
every scar on his trees,  
and his ancient voice instructed me  
while he stroked the horses.

### III

ONCE again I sought darkness.  
Crossing the city, the Andean night,  
the prodigal night, opened its rose  
against my suit.

It was winter in the South.  
Snow had mounted its high  
pedestal, the cold burned  
with a thousand frozen spikes.  
The Mapocho River was black snow.  
And I, going between one silent street  
and another of the tyrant-stained city,  
Ah! I was like the silence itself,  
watching love and more love pour  
through my eyes into my breast.  
Because this and that other street  
and the snow-capped lintel of night,  
the nocturnal aloneness of human beings,  
and my own dark submerged people  
in their tenements of the dead,  
everything, the last window with its small  
twig of false light,  
the crushed black coral  
of dwelling against dwelling-place,  
the unwearying wind of my land,  
all was mine, all

in the silence uplifted to me  
an abundant mouth of love.

#### IV

A YOUNG couple opened another door  
that was also unknown to me.

She was as golden  
as the mouth of June, he  
a tall engineer. From then on  
I shared their bread and wine,  
    little by little  
I reached their unknown intimacy.  
They told me: "We had  
separated,  
our misunderstanding was for ever;  
today we joined each other to receive you,  
today we waited for you together."  
In that small house  
we united to make  
a silent fortress.  
Even in sleep, I kept  
silence.  
I was in the very palm  
of the city and could almost hear  
the Traitor's steps; next to the walls  
dividing us, I listened  
to the jailers' filthy voices,  
their robbers' roars of laughter,  
their drunken syllables intermixed  
with bullets within my country's body.  
The belchings of Holgers and Poblete\*

---

\* Collaborators of González Videla, fascist dictator of Chile.

almost grazed my soundless skin,  
their dragging steps all but touched  
my heart and its fires:  
they sending my people to torment,  
I guarding the sword of my health.  
And again in the night, "Adiós Irene,  
adiós Andrés, adiós new friend,"  
adiós to the scaffoldings, the star,  
adiós perhaps, to the uncompleted house  
in front of my window that seemed  
inhabited by linear phantoms,  
adiós to the soaring mountain peak  
which drew my eyes each afternoon,  
adiós to the green neon sign  
whose lightning announced  
each new night.

## V

ANOTHER time, another night, I went  
further on; along the coastal mountain-range,  
the wide margin near the Pacific,  
then among twisted streets,  
lanes and alleyways: Valparaíso.  
I entered a seaman's home.  
His mother was waiting for me.  
—"I didn't know until yesterday, she said.  
My son told me and your name  
rushed through me like cold fire.  
But I said, What comforts, son,  
can we offer him?—He belongs  
to us, to the poor, he replied.  
He will not look down upon nor mock

our poor life, he upraises  
and defends it.—I told him,—so be it,  
and this is his home from today on.”

In that house, none knew me.

I looked at the clean tablecloth,  
the water-jar limpid as those lives  
which rose from the deepest night  
to reach me on crystal wings.

I went to the window: Valparaíso  
opened its thousand tremulous eyelids,  
the nocturnal sea air  
flowed into my mouth,  
the lights on the hills,  
the shimmer of nautical moon  
on the water, the darkness  
like a kingdom ablaze  
with green diamonds,  
all the new repose which life  
bestowed on me.

I looked about: the table  
was set: bread, napkin, wine, water,  
and a fragrance of earth and tenderness  
misted my soldier's eyes.

Beside that window in Valparaíso  
I spent my nights and days.  
The seamen of my new home  
daily hunted a ship  
which would take them.

Time after time  
they were deceived.

The *Atomena*  
could not carry them, nor the *Sultana*.  
They explained to me: if they gave a bribe

to one or the other official, others  
paid more.

Everything was rotten  
as in the Palace at Santiago.  
Here the pockets of a corporal  
or Secretary open not so wide  
as the pockets of the President,  
but enough to gnaw  
at the skeletons of the poor.  
Unhappy republic, dog thrashed  
by thieves, howling alone  
on the highways, flogged by police.  
Unhappy nation, Videla-ridden,  
flung by sordid gamblers  
to the vomit of informers,  
sold on broken street corners,  
dismantled at foreign auction.  
Tragic republic in hands of a man  
who sold his own daughter,  
and delivered up his country  
wounded, mute, and manacled.  
The two sailors came and went,  
to haul sacks, bananas, food,  
while hungering for the salt of waves,  
marine bread, the tall sky.

During my lonely day the sea  
withdrew; so I turned  
to the hills, vitally aflame  
with their overhanging houses,  
the pulse of Valparaíso:  
high hills overflowing  
with lives, doors painted

turquoise, scarlet, pink,  
toothless staircases,  
clusters of poor doorways,  
dilapidated shacks,  
the fog, its vapours casting  
brackish nets over everything,  
trees desperately gripping  
the cliffs,  
wash hanging from the arms  
of inhuman houses,  
the sudden hoarse whistle:  
offspring of embarkations,  
the marine voice compounded  
of crashes and whispers,  
all this enveloped my body  
like a new terrestrial garment,  
as I inhabited the high mist,  
the lofty town of the poor.

## VI

WINDOW in the hills, cold  
tin-ore Valparaíso, shattered  
into stones and cries of the people!  
Watch with me from my hiding-place  
the gray harbor ornamented  
with vessels, the moonlit water  
barely heaving,  
the motionless deposits of iron.

At an hour long past  
your sea, Valparaíso, was populated

by slender sailing-ships, proud  
five-masted clippers rustling  
with wheat, dispensing saltpeter,  
coming to you from nuptial oceans,  
heaping your storerooms.  
Tall schooners of nautical high-noon,  
merchant craft, banners  
swollen by oceanic night,  
bearing ebony and smooth clarity  
of ivory, aromas of coffee  
and nights beneath other moons,  
Valparaíso, they approached your  
perilous peace, enfolding you  
in perfume. The *Potosi*  
with its nitrates shuddered  
as it advanced over the sea:  
fish and arrow, blue turbulence,  
delicate whale, towards other  
dark harbors of the earth.  
All the southern night above  
the furled sails, above the  
stamen-nipples of the bow,  
when, over the Lady of the figurehead,  
face of those plunging prows,  
the whole Valparaisan night  
the world's antarctic night, descended.

## VII

IT WAS dawn of saltpeter on the pampas.  
The nitrous planet shook

until Chile was loaded like a ship  
with crystallized holds.

Today I saw what remained  
of all those who had passed  
leaving no trail on the Pacific sands.

Look at what I see,  
the derelict debris that slung around  
my country's throat, like a necklace  
of pus, the rainfall of gold.

Traveler, let my immobile stare  
accompany you, inseparable  
from the sky of Valparaíso.

The Chilean lives between  
garbage and antarctic winds,  
dark son of a harsh land.

Cracked window-panes, broken roofs,  
demolished walls, sunken door,  
leprous whitewash, clay floor  
clinging to thin  
hillside soil.

Valparaíso, impure rose,  
tainted marine coffin!

Wound me not with your thorny  
streets, your crown of sour  
alleyways, don't let me see  
the child maimed by misery  
in your deadly swamp!

In you I suffer for my people,  
for all my American fatherland,  
for all they have scraped from your  
bones, leaving you covered with scum,  
a wretched ruined goddess

upon whose sweet ravaged breast  
ravenous dogs urinate.

## VIII

VALPARAÍSO, I love all that you enclose,  
all your irradiations, ocean-bride,  
even beyond your quiet nimbus.  
I love the violent light you shed  
for the sailor on a night-sea,  
then you are luminous, naked,  
flame and mist, lemon-blossoms  
in shape of a rose.  
Let no one defend you, nor  
advance with furious hammer  
to strike what I love;  
none but myself for your secrets:  
none but my voice for your opalescent  
strands of dew, for your worn stairways  
where the salt maternity of sea  
kisses you, none but my lips  
against your cold siren's crown  
aloft in the air of your summits,  
my oceanic beloved, Valparaíso.  
Queen of the world's sea-coasts,  
central hub of ships and waves,  
you are inside me like the moon,  
or slant of air through a grove.  
I love your criminal alleys,  
your blade of moon above the hills,  
and your plazas where sailors ashore  
re clothe the spring in blue.

I beg you, my harbor, understand  
that mine is the privilege to write you  
about good and evil,  
for I am like a merciless lamp  
illuminating broken bottles.

## IX

I HAVE traveled celebrated seas,  
hymeneal wreaths of many islands,  
I am the sea-faring poet,  
journey to journey I reached  
the farthest foam,  
but you, pervasive marine love,  
were moored in me as none other.  
You are the mountainous capital  
of the vast ocean,  
along your cerulean flank of centaur  
your outskirts glow  
with the red and blue paint  
of toyshops.  
You would fit into a nautical bottle  
with your small houses and the cruiser *Latorre*  
like a gray flatiron poised on a sheet,  
were it not that the wild storms  
of the mightiest sea,  
    the green gales  
of glacial winds, the torment  
of your battered lands, the subterranean  
horror, the surf of all the sea  
surging against your upheld torch,  
made of you a magnitude of shadowed

rock, a hurricane-wrought cathedral  
of ocean spray.  
I declare my love to you, Valparaíso,  
and will return to live at your crossroads  
when both you and I  
are free again. You  
upon your throne of wind and wave, I  
upon my humid, philosophical lands.  
We will watch liberty arise  
between ocean and snow.  
Valparaíso, lone queen,  
alone in the solitude of the solitary  
austral ocean,  
    I discerned every yellow crag  
on your highlands,  
I felt your torrential pulse,  
your longshoreman hands embraced me  
as my soul required  
in that hour of night, and I remember  
you regnant in the brilliance  
of blue fire scattered  
by the spray-sparks of your reign.  
There is no other like you upon the sands,  
southern albacore, queen of the waters.

## X

So NIGHT after night  
in that long somber hour darkening  
the whole littoral of Chile,  
I went from door to door,  
a fugitive.

Other humble houses, other hands  
in every furrow of our land  
waited for my footsteps.

A thousand times  
you passed that doorway, and it told you  
nothing, that unpainted wall, those  
windows with wilted flowers.

This secret was for me;  
pulsating for me; it was  
in the coal mining regions,  
impregnated with martyrdom;  
it was in the coastal ports  
close to the antarctic archipelago;  
listen: perhaps it was along  
that clamorous street, amid the  
noonday music of street-sounds,  
or in that window next to the park  
indistinguishable from other windows,  
but awaiting me  
with a bowl of clear soup  
and its heart laid on the table.

All doors were mine,  
all said: "He is my brother,  
bring him to this poor house"  
while my country was like  
a bitter wine-press, stained  
by so much torture.

The little tinsmith came,  
the mother of those young girls,  
the ungainly farmer,  
the soap-maker, the gentle  
woman novelist, the young boy

nailed like a bug to his dreary  
office, they all came and their doors  
held a secret signal, a key guarded  
like a tower, so that I might enter  
abruptly, night, day or afternoon  
and without knowing anyone could say:  
“Brother, you know who I am,  
I believe you were expecting me.”

## XI

WHAT can you do, Traitor, against the air?  
What can you do, Traitor, against all  
that flowers and flourishes, is still  
and watchful, that waits for me  
and condemns you?  
Traitor, those bought by your betrayals  
must constantly be showered with coins.  
Traitor, you may capture, exile and torture,  
and hurriedly pay off  
before he who sells repents;  
but you can barely sleep  
surrounded by your bribed rifles,  
while I live in my country's lap,  
a fugitive of the night!  
How sad your small and slippery  
victory! While Aragon, Ehrenburg,  
Eluard, the poets of Paris,  
the valiant writers of Venezuela,  
and others, others, many others,  
are with me; you, Traitor  
are encircled by Escanilla, Cuevas,

Peluchonneaux and Poblete!\*  
Up ladders raised by my people,  
down cellars concealed by my people,  
upon my country and her dove-wing  
I sleep, dream, and smash your borders.

## XII

TO EVERYONE, to you  
silent night-beings, who grasped  
my hand in the shadows; to you  
lamps of immortal light, star trceries,  
bread of life, my secret brothers,  
to all, to you I say:  
there is no gratitude,  
nothing can fill your cups  
of purity or embody the sun  
on banners of invincible spring  
like your quiet dignity.  
I can only believe  
that perhaps I may have merited  
such simplicity, a blossom  
so immaculate, that perhaps  
I am one with you, the self-same,  
that particle of earth, flour and song,  
that natural dough, that knows  
from where it comes, and  
where it belongs. I am  
neither bell so distant  
nor crystal so deeply buried

---

\* Collaborators of González Videla.

that you cannot decipher me,  
I am simply people, hidden door,  
dark bread, and when you receive me  
you receive yourself, that guest  
so many times struck down  
and so many times  
reborn.

    All things, all people,  
those I do not know, all  
who have never heard my name, those  
who live along our lengthy rivers,  
at foot of volcanoes, in sulphuric  
shadow of copper, fishermen and farmers,  
Indians, blue beside the shores  
of lakes that flash like windows,  
the cobbler who asks for me at this moment,  
as he nails leather with ancient hands;  
you, unknowing, who waited for me  
I recognize, to you I belong  
and sing.

### XIII

AMERICAN sand, solemn planted  
field, red mountain-range,  
sons, brothers threshed by  
the old misfortunes,  
let us collect all the live grain  
before it returns to earth,  
and may the new corn yet to be born  
have heard your words and repeat  
them, and be repeated.

And sing by night and day,  
and bite and devour,  
and propagate throughout the earth,  
and fall swiftly silent,  
to sink below stones  
discover nocturnal doors  
and once more emerge in birth,  
to divide and conduct themselves  
like bread, like hope,  
like the air that circles ships.  
The corn will carry you my song  
risen from the roots of my people,  
to be born, to build, to sing,  
and to become seed again  
more numerous in combat.

Here are my lost hands,  
invisible still, but you  
can see them across the night,  
across the invisible wind.  
Give me your hands, I see them  
above the harsh sands  
of our American night,  
choose yours, and yours,  
this hand and that other,  
the one raised in fight, and the one  
that returns to be sown anew.

I feel no loneliness at night  
in the obscurity of earth.  
I am people, the innumerable people.  
In my voice is the clear strength

that can traverse silence  
and germinate in darkness.  
Death, suffering, shadows, frost,  
suddenly descend on the seed.  
And the people seem entombed.  
But corn returns to earth.  
Its red implacable hands  
thrust through the silence.  
From death comes our rebirth.

*(Translated by Waldeen.)*

TO MIGUEL HERNANDEZ, MURDERED  
IN THE PRISONS OF SPAIN

You came to me straight from the East. Goatherd, you  
brought me  
your furrowed innocence,  
the scholasticism of ancient pages, an aroma  
of Fray Luis, of orange blossoms, of dung  
burning in the mountains, and in your mask  
the prickly grain of gleaned oats,  
and a honey that measured the earth with your eyes.

You also brought the nightingale in your mouth.  
An orange-stained nightingale, a strand  
of incorruptible song, of leaf-stripped strength.  
Ah, boy, gunpowder intervened in the light,  
and you, with nightingale and rifle, walking  
beneath the moon and the sun of battle.

Now you know, my son, all that I could not do,  
now you know, that for me, in all of poetry  
you were the blue flame. Today  
I put my face against the ground to listen to you,  
to hear you: blood, music, dying honeycomb.

I have never seen race more radiant than yours,  
nor roots so tough, nor soldier's hands,  
I have seen nothing so alive as your heart  
consuming itself in the purple of my own banner.

Eternal youth, rebellious freeman from ages past,  
inundated by seeds of wheat and Spring,  
creased and dark like innate metal,  
awaiting the moment for your armor to be raised.

I am not alone since you died. I am among those  
who search for you. I am with those  
who will arrive one day, to avenge you.  
You will recognize my footsteps among them,  
as they hurl themselves on Spain's breast  
to crush Cain, so that the buried faces  
may be returned to us.

Let them know, the ones who killed you,  
that they will pay with blood.  
Let them know, those who tortured you,  
that they will face me one day.

Let them know, the accursed, who today include your name  
in their books, the Dámasos and Gerardos,\*  
the damnable, silent hangman's accomplices,  
that your martyrdom will not be effaced, that your death  
will fall across the full moon of their cowardice.  
And those, wreathed in moldy laurel, who denied  
you space on American earth, to extend  
the blood-stained lustre of your fluvial crown,

---

\* Spanish Franquista poets.

leave them to me, to contemptuous oblivion:  
for they wished to mutilate me by your absence.

Miguel, far from the Osuna prison, far from  
cruelty, Mao Tse-tung leads your devastated poetry  
in combat towards our victory.

And Prague, humming,  
constructs the sweet bee-hive of which you sang;  
verdant Hungary cleans out its granaries and dances  
alongside the river awakened from sleep;  
and Warsaw's naked siren arises, lifting  
her crystalline sword as she rebuilds.

And further on the land grows gigantic;  
the land  
visited by your song, and the steel that defended  
your country are safe, expanding  
upon the firmness  
of Stalin and his sons.

Already the light  
is spreading to your resting place.

Miguel of Spain, star  
of a ravaged land, I do not forget you, my son,  
I do not forget you!

But I learned life  
from your death: my eyes had commenced to mourn,  
when I discovered within me  
not tears  
but inexorable weapons!

Wait for them! Wait for me!

*(Translated by Waldeen.)*

## THE HEIGHTS OF MACCHU PICCHU

### I

FROM air to air like an empty net  
I went between streets and the atmosphere,  
through autumn's advent with its arrival  
and departure of new-coined leaves,  
between spring and the tasselled wheat  
as if inside a falling glove,  
where the greatest of loves gives us  
what is like a long moonrise.

(I live radiant days amid the storm  
of bodies: steel converted  
into silence of acid:  
nights unravelled to their last dust-grain:  
embattled strands of the nuptial fatherland.)

Someone who waited for me among violins  
uncovered a world like a buried tower  
its spiral sunk beneath all  
the hoarse sulphur-colored leaves:

and deeper, in the geological gold,  
like a sword swathed in meteors,  
I plunged my tender turbulent hand  
into the most genital of the earth.  
I put my forehead in the waves  
below,  
like a drop of water I slid into sulphuric peace,  
and like one blind, I returned  
to the jasmine of worn human springtime.

## II

flowers  
x. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1.

IF FLOWER delivers to flower its ultimate seed  
and rock preserves its scattered blossom  
in beaten raiment of diamond and sand,  
man crumples the petal of light he gathers  
from relentless ocean torrents  
and molds the palpitant metal in his hands.  
And soon, upon the sunken table, between  
garments and smoke, like a card-shuffled quantity,  
remains the soul:  
watchful quartz, tears in the sea  
like pools of cold: yet  
torment and kill it with paper and hatred,  
smother it in the carpet of days,  
lacerate it amid hostile clothing of wire.

No: along corridors, air, sea, or roads,  
who stands guard over his blood, knifeless  
(like the crimson poppies)? Fury has shrivelled up  
the sad merchandise of the dealer in human beings,  
while throughout a thousand years the dew

has left its transparent letter atop the plum tree,  
25 upon the same waiting branch, oh heart,  
oh crushed brow among the caverns of autumn!

How many times in the winter streets of a city, or in  
an autobus or a ship at dusk, or at night, in that densest  
of solitude: a party, beneath sound of shadows and bells,  
25 in that very grotto of human pleasure, I wanted to pause  
and search for the inscrutable eternal vein  
that I had touched before in stone,  
or in the lightning unleashed by a kiss.

(In the grain it is an amber story of small  
35 burgeoning breasts repeating its tender tale  
in endless germinal layers, and ever the same  
it threads through ivory, and in water is transparent  
fatherland, a bell, from distant snows  
to blood-darkened waves.)

40 I could grasp no more than a cluster of faces,  
hasty masks, like an empty ring of gold,  
like scattered clothes, children of a furious autumn  
that would tremble the wretched tree of frightened races.

45 My hand found no resting-place  
fluent as rivulet or firm  
as lump of anthracite or crystal  
to return the warmth or cold of my reaching hand.  
What was man? In what part of his open talk amid  
whistles and warehouses, in which of his metallic  
50 motions lived life, indestructible, imperishable?  
(where is life living?)

### III

THE human being like maize was threshed  
in the interminable granary of lost deeds,  
of miserable events, from the first to seven, to eight,  
and not one death but many deaths came to each:  
6 every day a small death, dust, worm, lamp extinguished  
in the mud of suburbs, a small thick-winged death  
entered every man like a short lance:  
and whether assailed by bread or knife,  
the drover, son of sea-ports, dark captain of the plow,  
17 or rodent of cluttered streets:  
all grew listless awaiting death, their brief daily death:  
and the sad crumbling of their days was  
a black cup from which trembling they drank.

### IV

DEATH the powerful invited me many times:

it was like the invisible salt of waves,  
and what emanated from its invisible flavor  
seemed halves of peaks and avalanches  
5 or vast constructions of wind and glacier.

I came to the iron edge, the straits  
of air, to the shroud of agriculture and rock,  
to the stellar void of final steps  
10 and vertiginous spiral highway:  
but, wide sea, oh death! you do not come wave on wave,  
but gallop in nocturnal clarity  
like the total sums of the night.

You never came scrabbling in pockets, inconceivable  
15 your visit without red vestment:  
without aureoreal carpet of encircling silence:  
without lofty or buried heritage of tears.

I could not love the tree in every being  
shouldering its diminutive Autumn  
20 (death of a thousand leaves),  
all the false dying and resurrection  
without earth, without abyss:  
I wanted to swim through the broadest lives,  
in the freest river mouths,  
25 and when little by little man refused me  
and began closing ranks and doors so that  
my flowing hands could not touch his wounded inexistence,  
then I went from street to street and river to river,  
and city to city and bed to bed,  
30 and my briny mask crossed the desert,  
and in the last humbled houses, without light, fire,  
bread, stone, without silence, alone,  
I rolled over and over, dying of my own death.

wounded  
inexistence

---

V

It was not you, grave death, bird of harsh plumage,  
whom the poor inheritor of these dwellings  
carried within him between hurried meals, beneath empty skin;  
it was something else, a poor petal of devastated cord,  
35 an atom of the breast that did not enter combat  
or the acrid dew that did not touch the brow.  
It was what could not be reborn, a fragment  
of that small death without peace or territory:

a bone, a bell that died within him.

10 I lifted iodine bandages, sank my hands  
in the poor sorrows which were killing death,  
and found nothing in the wound but a cold draft  
blowing through the vague interstices of the soul.

## VI

THEN I climbed the ladder of earth  
through the fearful maze of lost forests

up to you, *Macchu Picchu*.

Tall city of scaling stones,  
6 residence, finally, of what earth  
did not conceal in her sleeping vesture.  
In you like two parallel lines  
the cradle of lightning and man  
was rocked by a thorny wind. →

10 Stome mother, condors' foam.

High reef of the human dawn.

Shovel lost in the primordial sand.

This was the abode, this is the place:  
here ascended the full grains of corn —  
15 to descend anew like red hailstorms. *h. m. z. c.*

Here the vicuña shed its golden wool  
to clothe tombs, loves, mothers,

king, prayers, warriors.

Here at night the feet of man  
20 rested by the feet of eagles, in their high  
carnivorous lairs, and at dawn  
trod tenuous mists beside the feet of thunder,  
touching fields and stones  
until they knew them come night or death.  
25 I look at robes, and hands,  
at traces of water in the resonant hollow,  
at the wall smoothed by touch of a face  
that looked with my eyes at earthly lamps,  
that oiled with my hands the vanished woods:  
30 for everything, clothes, skin, vessels,  
words, wine, bread,  
is gone, fallen to earth.  
And the air with orange-flower fingers  
flowed over the sleepers: a thousand years  
35 of air, months, weeks of air,  
of blue wind, of iron mountain-range,  
that passed like soft hurricanes of footsteps  
polishing the solitary dwelling-place of stone.

## VII

ANCIENT dead of a single abysm, shadows of a ravine,  
this profundity is measure of your magnitude;  
when death came, total, consuming,  
did you plunge from the fretted rocks,  
40 the scarlet capitals,  
the climbing aqueducts  
as if into an autumn,

into a single death?

Today the vacant air no longer weeps,  
10 no longer knows your earthen feet,  
has forgotten your jars that filtered the sky  
when pierced by knives of lightning,  
and the mighty tree was eaten  
by fog, felled by gust of wind.

15 The hand upheld suddenly dropped  
from summit to end of time.  
You no longer exist, spider hands, frail  
fibres, tangled cloth, all that you were  
has fallen: customs, frayed syllables,  
20 masks of blazing light.

But this permanence of stone and word:  
this city like a goblet, raised up in hands  
of all the living, dead, silent, sustained  
by so much death, a wall: stone petals struck  
25 from so much life: the permanent rose, the dwelling-place,  
this Andean atoll of glacial colonies.

When the clay-colored hand  
became clay, and the small eyelids closed,  
full of rough walls, peopled with castles,  
30 and when all of man was wrapped in his burrow,  
precision remained, unfurled on high:  
the towering site of humanity's dawn:  
the tallest vessel for containing silence:  
35 one stone life after so many lives.

## VIII

AMERICAN love, climb with me.

Kiss with me these secret stones.

The torrential silver of the *Urubamba*  
draws the flying pollen to its yellow chalice.

The emptiness of vine, of petrous plant,  
of hard garland, soars over  
the boxed silence of mountains.

Come minute life, between wings of earth,  
while, oh savage water, crystal and cold,  
pummelled air, scattering combatant emeralds  
you descend from the snow.

Love, love, until the abrupt nightfall,  
from the resonant Andean ridges,  
towards the reddening knees of dawn,  
contemplate the blind son of snows.

Oh *Wilkamayu* of sonorous strings,  
when you break your lineal thunder  
into white spume, like wounded snow,  
when your steep windstorm sings  
and castigates arousing the sky,  
what language do you convey to the ear  
newly out-flung from your Andean foam?

Who seized the lightning of cold  
and left it enchained on the summits,

75 its glacial tears divided  
its swift spears shaking  
its warlike filaments thrashing  
carried along its warrior bed,  
startled onto its rocky end?

70 What do your besieged reflections say?  
Did your secret rebel lightning rays  
travel before thronged with words?  
who shatters frozen syllables,  
dark speech, golden banners,  
75 deep mouths, subdued shouts,  
within your slight arterial waters?

Who slashes the floral eyelids  
come to watch from along the earth?  
Who tosses the dead clusters  
80 down your cascading hands  
to flail their harvest of night  
into your geological coal?

Who flings the enchained branch over precipices?  
Who once more entombs the farewells?

90 Love, love, touch not the boundary line,  
nor worship the submerged head:  
let time fulfill its stature  
in its hall of choked springs,  
and between ramparts and swift water  
50 gather air from the sheer mountain-path,  
the parallel laminas of wind,

the blind channel of cordilleras,  
the pungent salute of dew,  
and climb, flower to flower, through the density,  
76 treading on the outflung serpent.

Within the zone of crags, rock and forest,  
dust of green stars, luminous jungle,  
*Mantur* explodes like a living lake  
or yet another storey of silence.

62 Come to my very being, to my own daybreak,  
up to the crowned solitudes.

The dead kingdom still lives.

And across the sundial the condor's cruel shadow  
cruises like a black ship.

## IX

ASTRAL eagle, vineyard of mist.  
Lost bastion, blind scimitar.  
Starred belt, solemn bread.  
Torrential ladder, immense eyelid.  
5 Triangular tunic, pollen of stone.  
Granite lamp, bread of stone.  
Mineral serpent, rose of stone.  
Buried ship, freshet of stone.  
Moon-horse, light of stone.  
10 Equinoctial square, vapor of stone.  
Ultimate geometry, book of stone.  
Iceberg hewn by the winds.

- Madrepore of submerged time.  
 Wall smoothed by fingers.
- 1<sup>c</sup> Roof assailed by storming feathers.  
 Mirrored boughs, bases of storm.  
 Thrones overturned by twining leaves.  
 Régime of the pitiless claw.  
 Windstorm anchored to the slope.
- 1<sup>s</sup> Immobile turquoise waterfall.  
 Patriarchal bell of the slumberers.  
 Chain of vanquished snows.  
 Iron reclining upon statues.  
 Inaccessible, enclosed tempest.
- 1<sup>c</sup> Puma hands, blood-thirsty rock.  
 Shadowy tower, snowy discussion.  
 Night upraised on fingers and roots.  
 Window for mists, petrified dove.  
 Nocturnal plant, statue of thunderbolts.
- 2<sup>s</sup> essential cordillera, marine ceiling.  
 Architecture of lost eagles.  
 Sky-cord, mountain bee.  
 Bloodied plane, structured star.  
 Mineral bubble, quartz moon.
- 3<sup>c</sup> Andean serpent, amaranth brow.  
 Cupola of silence, pure fatherland.  
 Bride of the sea, cathedral tree.  
 Salt-branch, black-winged cherry tree.  
 Frosty teeth, cold thunder.
- 3<sup>c</sup> Clawed moon, menacing stone.  
 Cold locks of hair, action of air.  
 Silver wave, time's direction.

X

STONE upon stone: man, where was he?  
Air upon air: man, where was he?  
40 Time upon time: man, where was he?  
Were you also the small broken fragment  
of inconclusive man, of hollow eagle,  
that along today's streets, with footprints,  
with leaves of dead autumn  
45 tramples the soul until the grave?  
Poor hand, foot, poor life . . .  
Days of unravelled light  
falling on you like rain  
on fiesta banderillas, did they  
50 drop their dark food petal by petal  
into your empty mouth?  
Hunger, coral of man,  
hunger, secret plant, woodcutters' root,  
hunger, did your jagged reef  
55 rise to these high crumbling towers?

I question you, salt of the roadways,  
show me the spoon; architecture, let me  
gnaw with a stick at your stone stamens,  
climb all the steps of air into nothingness,  
60 scrape at your entrails until I reach man.

*Macchu Picchu*, did you lay  
stone upon stone, and at the base, a rag?  
Coal upon coal, and at the bottom, a tear?  
Fire upon gold, and trembling within,  
65 the red raindrop of blood?

blood, sweat,  
tear

Return to me the slave that you buried.  
Disgorge from the earth the hard bread  
of the wretched, show me the garments  
of the serf and his window.

10 Tell me how he slept when he lived.  
Tell me if his slumber  
was hoarse, half-agape, like a black hole  
in the wall made by fatigue.  
The wall, the wall! Tell me if every stone floor  
15 weighed upon his sleep, and if he fell beneath  
as beneath a moon, in deathlike sleep!

Ancient America, submerged bride,  
your fingers too, emerging from the forest  
toward the steep void of gods, beneath  
20 nuptial banners of light and stateliness,  
mingling with thunder of drums and spears,  
your fingers too, those  
that transplanted the abstract rose, the linear cold,  
the blood-stained bosom of new grain, up to  
25 the web of radiant matter, the fissured rock,  
you too, buried America, did you too, in the  
innermost bitterness of entrail, like an eagle,  
retain hunger?

## XI

THROUGH the confused splendor  
through the stone night, let me thrust my hand  
and like a bird for a thousand years prisoner  
let the old heart of him who is forgotten  
3 beat within me!

*the proletarian*

Let me forget today this joy wider than the sea  
because man is wider than the sea and all its islands,  
and one must plumb him like a well, to rise  
from the depths with a branch of secret water,  
10 of submerged truths.  
Broad stone, let me forget your powerful proportions,  
your transcendent measure, your honeycombed stones,  
and today let me slide my hand over the geometric square,  
over its hypotenuse of stinging blood and scourge.  
15 When, like a horseshoe of red scarab-wings, the furious  
condor strikes my breast in the rhythm of his flight  
and the hurricane of voracious feathers  
sweeps the sombre dust of diagonal staircases,  
I do not see the swift bird of prey,  
20 nor the blind cycle of his talons,  
I see the ancient being, the servant, the sleeper  
in fields, I see a body, a thousand bodies,  
one man, a thousand women,  
blackened by rain and night, under the black wind,  
25 beside the heavy stone statue:  
Juan Stonecutter, son of *Wiracocha*,  
Juan Coldeater, son of green star,  
Juan Nakedfoot, grandson of turquoise,  
rise and be born with me, brother.

## XII

RISE and be born with me, brother.

Give me your hand from the deep region  
of your far-flung sorrow.  
You will not return from beneath the rocks.

5 You will not return from subterranean time.

Your stone-hardened voice will not come back.

Your chiselled eyes will not come back.

Look at me from the depths of earth,  
tiller, weaver, silent shepherd:

10 tamer of companion guanacos:

mason of defiant scaffolding:

water-carrier of Andean tears:

jeweller of crushed fingers:

farmer trembling in the seed:

20 potter amid your spilled clay:

bring to this cup of new life

your old buried griefs.

Show me your blood and your furrow,

tell me: here I was punished,

25 because the jewel did not shine or the soil

did not yield on time its stone or its grain:

point out to me the rock on which you fell,

and the wood whereon you were crucified,

rekindle for me the ancient flints,

30 the old lamps, the whips stuck to open wounds

throughout the centuries,

and the brilliant bloody axes.

I come to speak through your dead mouth.

Join together across the earth

35 all the silent scattered lips

and speak to me from below, all this long night

as if I were anchored among you,

tell me everything, chain by chain,  
link by link, and step by step,  
↳ ~~sharpen the knives that you kept,~~  
place them in my breast, my hand,  
like a river of yellow beams,  
like a river of buried tigers,  
and let me weep, hours, days, years,  
↳ blind ages, stellar centuries.

power  
strike

Give me silence, water, hope.

Give me struggle, iron, volcanoes.

Cling to me, bodies, like magnets.

Resort to my veins and my mouth.

↳ Speak through my words and my blood.

*(Translated by Waldeen.)*

## TO HOWARD FAST

I SPEAK to you, Howard Fast. You, who are jailed.  
I embrace you, my comrade; and I bid you good morning,  
my brother.

I saw Spain's doors close, and I saw a poet's head rolling in  
the shadows;  
he who was Spain's light.  
The bloody beasts closed in upon him,  
and from that time Spain has known  
darkness and night and blood and tears.  
I am not of this country. I am from Chile.  
My comrades are there, and my books, and my house that  
gazes upon the cold Pacific's gigantic waves.  
They wish that I, too, were in a deep prison,  
or dead and forever silent.

Franco, Truman, Trujillo; all hate man's voice.  
But before they chain all men, before they make  
all men cower in terror,  
they hunt down the writer and the singer.  
There is a clot of blood on Franco's necktie.

Trujillo keeps his daggers sharp.  
Truman, the jailer, is howling at the bars  
that imprison America's best thought.  
Who knew Paraguay's miseries? Who tasted  
bitter blood, taste inescapable  
for in Arequipa young cadavers spewed  
blood's ugly red blanket over the field of struggle?  
In Bolivia they shot the miner  
at the foot of a high tin pyramid; pyramid whose tin  
was wrenched from the earth with his hands, hands empty  
now.

In Venezuela the shackles rise from the sea, from oblivion,  
to again bring infamy.  
In Colombia they destroy the strong, intense current  
of a people; destroy it in silence.  
And in Chile  
the phantom moon of the desert hangs above the persecuted.

But today it is not the deep forests, nor is it the unknown  
vast land of South America  
that forces men to martyrdom.  
It is the proud mansion of the rich,  
it is the golden nation of the north,  
it is the castle bristling with factories  
where the Statue of Liberty's torch  
lights the way to prison.

Howard Fast, you have gone to prison. Your books  
have been one by one like huge bonfires  
lighting America's life.  
You have written of black heroes,  
of captains and highways,

of the poor and of the cities.  
And now you go to jail with illustrious companions,  
and on your head I see falling the same dark snow  
that I watched descend upon Spain; the same  
night, the same shade, the same blood.

Oh land of the States! Oh sovereign youth!  
Waken to life, nation large and naked,  
like a reaper in fields of wheat  
standing over the world's gifts.

Today, North America, like crystal transformed suddenly into  
dung,  
you appear to have changed into a pile of voracious maggots  
each devouring the other.  
A den of denouncers, an island of inquisitions,  
gestapo reborn.  
Pit of traffickers, throne of police.  
And the dewy garden where Jefferson's common sense pro-  
claimed uprightness  
is today a furious plain where a mad sheriff gallops on horse-  
back into libraries  
and the pistol that embarked in Nicaragua has authority  
to shoot unions.

Howard Fast, the fear which cut Chile like a malicious knife's  
edge,  
the senseless poison of Goebbels and Somoza,  
the criminal gusts that darken Greece;  
today, over your chosen head,  
they disgorge their legions and start their invasion of your  
country.

The same executioners have marked you for theirs.  
They want to blot out your great pages.  
We have known this,  
but now we know too much not to make ready for them.

Those of us who love you are in all lands.  
We see in you the figure of the people.  
We hear in your voice chords not to be muted.  
We march toward peace with you and with your people.  
Your face is a banner that we see from your prison,  
and we follow the steps of each jailer.  
By your example we will grow.  
We will be a multitude upon the earth.  
Our energy will be an ocean's infinity.  
Today's prisons will be tomorrow's victory.

*(Translated by Isabel.)*