



# WOBBLY POEMS OF HUMOR & REBELLION

Son of a Mexican Wobbly father and a German socialist-pacifist mother, Carlos Cortez was born and raised in Milwaukee, but has long made his home in Chicago. During the Second World War he served two years in the federal pen at Sandstone, Minnesota for refusing to fight the bosses' war, and shortly afterward joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Ever since—as poet, artist, editor and public speaker—he has been one of the union's best-known figures.

Renowned especially for his powerful woodcuts and cartoons—he is probably the only Wobbly whose work has been exhibited at New York's Museum of Modern Art—Cortez has also been, for many years now, the most noted columnist for the union's newspaper, the *Industrial Worker*.

His poems have long been Wobbly favorites—Joan London and Edward Abbey are among the many who have praised them highly—and several have appeared in anthologies. This little volume, however, is his first collection to appear in book form. Passionate tributes to Joe Hill and other Wobbly martyrs; lyrics protesting war and racial injustice; humorous assaults on modern technology and moving celebrations of biodiversity—all the poems of Carlos Cortez exemplify the old IWW slogan: “Let's make this planet a good place to live.”

Eugene Nelson, founder of Homes For All and author of *Bracero, Huelga: The First 100 Days of the Delano Grape Strike* and *Pablo Cruz and the American Dream*, contributes a short Introductory essay.

POETS OF REVOLT

Number Three

**Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company**  
*Books for Rebel Workers Since 1886*

This book is dedicated to my parents,  
Alfredo and Augusta Cortez.  
C.A.C.



*On the Cover:*  
Carlos Cortez: Self-Portrait  
(woodblock, 1985)

Most of the poems in this book originally appeared in the *Industrial Worker*, monthly organ of the IWW. For information on subscriptions, and on IWW activity today, write to IWW, 3435 North Sheffield Avenue, Room 202, Chicago, Illinois 60657.

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I.U.



450

*Printed by 100% union labor.*

**Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company**

*Established 1886*

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# CARLOS CORTEZ

*With its banana splits  
and split atoms,  
Quiz shows and loan offices,  
Juke boxes and supermarkets,  
Nuclear tests and piece-work,  
Best-sellers and marriage-counselors,  
Formulas and falsies,  
Progress goes on  
And on and  
On and  
On*

*. . .*

*Leaving farther behind  
The spot on the road  
Where the wrong fork  
was taken*

**POETS of REVOLT**

*Number Three*

Carlos Cortez

**CRYSTAL-GAZING**  
**THE AMBER FLUID**  
*& Other Wobbly Poems*

*With Illustrations  
by the Author*

Introduction by  
Eugene Nelson



**POETS OF REVOLT**  
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1990



*Carlos Cortez reading his poems at the  
Kenneth Patchen Festival (Ohio, 1989)*

## INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare wrote "The face is no index to the mind." But the moment I first set eyes on the legendary Carlos Cortez at my second convention of the Industrial Workers of the World in 1972 in Chicago, something said in my brain: this man is a genius. A genius of intellect, a social genius, a genius at living. And: his face is a poem, his whole being is a poem. For there are people, a fortunate few (Walt Whitman was one), whose vivid, lively love of life and the world is so great that it overflows through their eyes and glows from their faces.

I had been attracted to the IWW partly because the accounts of it I had read evoked a vision of a group of people who treated one another with more love and respect and high-spirited good humor than any aggregation of humans I had ever read or heard about, while at the same time risking their well-being in one of the most selfless and important social struggles in history. As much as any Wobbly I had met or was to meet, Carlos Cortez, to my almost delirious delight, matched this passionately wishful pre-vision I had of the prototypical old-time Wobbly, saint and rebel and jovial sharp-tongued social critic and hearty boon companion all rolled into one. No doubt in my seeking out of idealistic Wobblies I was looking for a brother—since I was an only child—and a father—since my own had been ruined and consigned to a pauper's urn by the heartlessness and irrationality of the capitalist economic system.

I already knew something of Carlos. I knew he was about fifty years old, the son of a Mexican Wobbly father\* and a German socialist-pacifist mother. That

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\* The Smithsonian Institution recently released an album containing a recording of Carlos's father, Alfredo Cortez, singing one of Joe Hill's songs.



he had grown up in Milwaukee and later moved to Chicago. That he had spent two years in federal prison in World War II because he did not want to kill living things. Although I was glad that enough people fought to defeat fascism, I also thought it extremely important that some people kept alive the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." I knew that he had written the biting, humorously satirical and unique column "Left Side" in the IWW's *Industrial Worker* newspaper for many years, and two of the most moving poems in *Rebel Voices*: "Where Are the Voices?" and "Digging the Squares at Jack London Square." I knew he was no ivory tower writer but had distilled his prose and poetry from the sweat of long hours as a stevedore and at other brutal, boring and underpaid jobs. I knew that his wife Marianna was from the nation that gave the concept of democracy to the world. I knew Carlos was an acclaimed muralist, woodblock artist and cartoonist. It was almost too much to hope that I could become a personal friend of this remarkable individual. It was one of the miracles of my life that we did become close and lasting friends, and even *compadres*.

In those heady days of my first IWW conventions I was to meet other brilliant and dedicated Wobblies: Walter H. Westman, the one-legged workhorse (he had lost his other leg in a freight-riding accident) who had doggedly kept the One Big Union's books for disappointing decades when the IWW all but disappeared); Fred Thompson, the IWW's own chief historian and theorist, who had spent four years in San Quentin as one of the "criminal syndicalism" victims; Frank Cedervall, the greatest public speaker I had ever heard; Bruce "Utah" Phillips, the Wobblies' superlative troubadour and nonpareil teller of tall tales—and many more. In such a company of remarkable people it was



perhaps inevitable that a talent such as Carlos's should flourish. In addition he had been influenced by the great pacifist writer Kenneth Patchen, and in art by the print-maker Posada and the expressionist Kollwitz.

After that 1972 convention, perhaps partly due to our common interest in the struggles of Mexican and Chicano farm workers, Carlos and I developed an ever-growing friendship. A few months later he and Mariana came to visit me and my daughter Tamar in northern California, and became Tamar's godparents. He was invaluable to me in helping broaden my understanding of the IWW and of the world in general. He generously illustrated two my books. He and Mariana have been my generous and gracious hosts on my far too infrequent visits to Chicago, where their large living room was more an exciting center of revolutionary and artistic activity than a conventional home. His upbeat and insightful approach to life more than once has helped save me from despair and has given me valuable inspiration in my own creative efforts. In persuading my half-Mexican daughter to attend D-Q University, a Native American and Chicano school near Sacramento, California, to which Carlos had made a generous donation, he was instrumental in adding a vastly richer perspective to her life.

Poetry, of course, is no stranger to the IWW and its publications. The IWW has perhaps created more art than any social movement in history in proportion to its size. Ralph Chaplin, author of "Solidarity Forever," penned some of the most stirring poems about union struggles ever written. "An Appeal to Women," by Vera Moller, about an eastern textile strike in the 1920s, is the best poem inviting women to join the union cause that I have ever read. Jim Seymour's "The Dishwasher" is a classic, and his excellent sonnet, "To a

Fair Libertarian,” in which he downgrades the usual physical charms and avers, “I write but to the brilliance of your mind,” was written long before the more recent upsurge of the women’s movement. Some of the overtly revolutionary poetry of Carlos Cortez possesses as much literary excellence as any poetry about the union movement ever written. He has written more passionate and sharply satirical antiwar and pro-environment poems than anyone I know. And as far as I know he is the only poet who has written in English, Spanish and Nahuatl.

It should be no surprise that the IWW produces poets. For the best poetry is an intensification of language and life that can thrill the mind more than any dangerous drug, and create the sort of higher expectations from life that lead to social struggle and a better world. Some good poetry can have a moral quality to it that makes us more ethical beings, regardless of the subject matter of the poem. Some of Carlos’s ostensibly non-revolutionary poems, like some haiku, have a thrilling originality and freshness to them that electrify and awaken the brain, and make you feel: this is so beautiful and good, it makes my mind feel so alive and good, I feel like going out and spreading joy and justice to every living thing. Perhaps most noteworthy of all, much of Fellow Worker Cortez’s poetry has a biting and often outrageous humor of his own which places him solidly in the Wobbly tradition yet makes him a true original.

And there are Carlos’s many overtly revolutionary poems, his tributes to the IWW martyrs—the immigrant Swede Joe Hill, the half-Indian Frank Little, and others—and poems in which he pillories the rich welfare cheaters and calls for all people to share in the wealth and work and decision-making of the world.

Long before the present upsurge of environmentalism began, Carlos was pleading, in both poetry and prose, for the survival of the Earth's diversity of flora and fauna. If there is one thing approaching a common denominator in his poetry it is a respect and love for all living things.

A few months ago I had a dream about Carlos. He was sitting in a beautiful wooded area next to a lovely woman. At some point in the vague and diaphanous dream someone referred to her as Mother Nature. A dozen or so people were gathered about in a circle. Brightly-colored blades of wind-machines whirled nearby. Carlos and his companion were dispensing advice to two groups of co-op members about some conflict involving a desirable balance between nature and technology, helping them achieve a consensus. And doing so gently, wisely, successfully. They seemed to be some sort of combination of ombudspeople and arbitrators. As the dream ended the visitors went their ways happily. Carlos and I talked for a while and then he went to work in his garden. After a hazy interval of time he sat down to write a poem.

That's the way I see Carlos. As worker, wise man, poet. If there were such a position as chief advisor and arbitrator for the world I would nominate him for the post. For he loves the world and living things more than anyone I know. Recently writers became heads of state in two eastern European nations. As Shelley wrote: "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." With poets and writers and artists such as Carlos Cortez gaining more and more influence, perhaps it will not be long before the world is civilized at last.

*Berkeley, California*  
*September 1990*

Eugene Nelson



## CRYSTAL-GAZING THE AMBER FLUID

Sitting at this bar  
Thinking of places  
Afar  
In my glass of beer  
I see  
Thru the smoke filled haze  
Of this room  
Like a crystal vision  
Looms  
A ribbon of cement  
Black line down the middle  
Perdition bent  
Like a galloping snake  
On the make  
Thru treeless prairies  
And bottomless passes  
Ever in motion  
Over moonkissed desert  
Toward golden California  
Grasses  
Stopped only  
By a big blue ocean,  
Man - - - - !  
Give me the song  
If you can  
Of a Greyhound motor's  
Tirade  
Crawling along  
Some old ten-mile grade  
Where life can be complete

On a bumpy seat  
Watching the great U S A  
And life itself passing  
On its way  
And all the while  
I say to myself each gulp  
of beer  
Is costing me  
Another mile!

## SUNDAY ON MANITOWOC AVE.

The morning sound of birds  
Is noisily interrupted  
By the passing over  
Of Brave New Frontiers,  
Spanking new jets  
Joined by a bit of obligato  
From the church bells.

And after a little while  
The birds can be heard again.



## REQUIEM FOR A SWEDE

A cold November morn  
Standing alone against a stone wall  
Beneath a blue Ute sky

A song writing  
Accordion playing  
Itinerant  
Ballad singing  
Freedom loving  
Son of Man:

Haegglund,  
Hillstrom,  
Hill

Far from his boyhood Gaevle  
Where his first years were known  
Across a continent  
And  
Across an ocean  
In the land of Viking grandsires  
Where the Sun first warmed his face.

The same Sun looks down  
On capitalist rifles  
Whose targets are usually Men of Toil  
And Men of Vision  
And Men of Agitation.

A Mormon voice barks out:  
Fire!!!

A group of rifles bark out:  
Bang!!!

Somewhere in a deep green forest  
Weighted with the ravages of centuries  
A stately pine crashes to the ground.

Over the prison yard's black cinders  
Spreads another hue  
The color of the working class standard  
And the Sun warms that face  
For the last time.

Somewhere  
Lodged in a decaying log  
A small pine cone sends forth  
A green shoot.

Somewhere  
In a Rebel Valhalla  
Playing an accordion  
Singing a song  
A spirit waits  
For a class conscious  
Armageddon

## CITY CENTRAL BLUES

With a window of iron  
And a mattress of wood,  
A concrete floor  
Where many a rounder  
Has stood

Contemplating  
The small horizon  
With a bit of despair,  
Pensively seated  
On a porcelain chair

Sucking a cigarette  
Then flicking the air,  
Each ash  
Belonging to the past  
Burning away like life itself  
The years stacking  
Like books on a shelf

Thoughts before  
Never understood  
Till face to face  
With a window of iron  
And a mattress of wood.



## COMMUNICATION

So often have I listened to those cultural snobs  
Who consider themselves authorities on music

Wax profoundly  
On the works of Bach  
And the complexity  
Of his compositions  
That can only be understood  
By Musicians' musicians  
And certainly beyond  
The comprehension  
Or appreciation  
Of the unschooled  
Rabble.

But I remember a bygone evening as I was spinning  
A hi-fi Brandenburg Concerto on my low-fi machine

From the kitchen  
The voice of my Mother  
Who spent most of her life  
In a German farm community  
Never digging anything  
More uplifting than  
A wheezy Saturday night  
Concertina,

Asking me:

"Son,

What are you playing there that sounds so much  
Like springtime."

## ADIOS TECOPITA

*(News item: The Tecopa pupfish was removed from the U.S. government's list of endangered species because it has become extinct. The one-and-a-half inch fish is the first species ever removed from the list for that reason. Interior Department officials said they took the action after their search of 40 waterways around Tecopa, California failed to turn up any of the fish in 1982.)*

There are no more pupfish in the waterways  
Around Tecopa,  
The town they were named after;  
That is what they tell us,  
Those officials who keep track of  
Things like that; what sadness,  
A whole race of creatures has disappeared  
Never to come back again!  
It is said that the big fish always eat.  
The little fish, and that seems to be  
The morality of today's world  
Only the big fish who did in the Tecopa  
Pupfish do not have scales, gills or fins  
Nor do they live under water.  
It gives me a sadness  
That a whole race of  
Creatures has disappeared—never to come back.  
The buffalo, they had meat and hides  
And were in the invader's way,  
That is why they no longer darken the Plains,  
But these little pupfish,  
    What meat did they have?  
    What hides did they offer?  
And whose way were they in?

I have never seen these fish that were only  
An inch and a half long nor have I ever  
Had a frying pan that was only two inches wide  
So I would never have bothered them.  
Anyway a whole race of creatures has disappeared  
Never to come back again.  
I used to swim in small rivers and lakes  
And at the same time drink of the water.  
I no longer drink the water  
While I swim,  
And at many waters it is not  
even safe to swim;  
One river  
even caught fire  
While flowing through a city.  
I used to see flocks of antelope  
From the bus window.  
Now I must go to a zoo  
To get close to an antelope  
It's the same with the buffalo.  
I enjoy the Sun  
when rising in the morning . . . East  
And when setting in the evening . . . West  
Because these are the times when  
I can look him straight  
In the face without hurting my eyes.  
But now there are places where I can do  
The same at high noon;  
It gives me a sadness  
That a whole race of  
Creatures has disappeared  
Never to come back again . . .



Did you know about the Tecopa fish  
As you raced down  
The highways throwing beer cans  
Out of your windows?  
When you turn up your  
Air-conditioners, hair dryers,  
And electric tooth brushes  
Or when your thermostats are up high  
So you can walk around in shorts  
While looking at the snowdrifts outside,  
Or when you are making  
Tracks with your snowmobiles?  
Do you even care  
That from the face of this earth  
A whole race of creatures has disappeared  
Never to come back again?  
It gives me a sadness.

## ATHENS, MAY 1, '66

We asked the priest for the grave of Lambrakis  
But he pointed us in the oppsite direction.

Later when we finally found  
The simple concrete shaft  
Decorated with the CNVA symbol  
Instead of the cross,  
We remembered the annoyance on the priest's face.  
Naturally now, we will warn all our friends  
But we will also instruct them  
To always ask the priest.

CNVA = Committee for Non-violent Action, an anarchist-  
inclined direct action pacifist group active in the 1960s.

## A DIFFERENCE

The scissor-bill who spits

at my placard,

Hurls obscenities

And yells,

“Go back to

Russia!”

Him I do not feel

too angry at;

He only has a long

way to go.

But the person who glances

around furtively

Before confidentially whispering

to me,

“I agree with you;

What you’re doing is great!”

That one I cannot

stand;

That one, he is going

nowhere!

## PROGRESS

Roaring jets  
Fill the sky  
That once echoed  
With the song of birds

Flashing neons  
Shine on streets  
That once shone  
Beneath moon and stars.

Asphalt and concrete  
Smother the good dirt  
That once nurtured  
Soft cool grass.

Open windows  
That once let in  
The song of crickets  
Regurgitate with the howl  
of TV loudspeakers  
Chanting the way of mediocrity  
To the chemelite multitudes  
As the crickets silently go  
Some place else.

Roadways once lined  
With weeds and flowers  
Are festooned  
With motels and billboards,  
Old papers and broken bottles,  
Cigar butts and drive-ins,

Kleenex and step-ins,  
Empty beer cans  
And empty car-hops,  
And certain discarded objects  
That cause the cardinal  
No small indignation,  
As flowers silently grow  
Some place else.

With its banana splits  
And split atoms,  
Quiz shows and loan offices,  
Juke boxes and supermarkets,  
Nuclear tests and piece-work,  
Best-sellers and marriage counselors,  
Formulas and falsies,  
Progress goes on  
And on and  
On and  
On  
Thru  
Jerry-built subdivisions  
And chrome-plated  
Shopping centers,  
Hacking its way  
Thru the neon jungle  
Leaving farther behind  
The spot on the road  
Where the wrong fork  
was taken.

## YOUNGSTOWN

The waters of the Mahoning  
Are being hidden  
By a jungle of steel mills  
Spreading like a rusty  
    scab  
On the Ohio landscape.

A once beautiful valley  
And its grey-pallored  
    hillsides  
Speak out  
With a lesson on  
    Free Enterprise  
No textbook could give.

## REQUIEM FOR A STREET\*

Well, they have finally gotten around to the Street, these apostles of civic improvement, they are advancing with their cranes and bulldozers tearing down the old slums so that newer and bigger and loftier slums can be built on this, the Street once lined with an endless array of small shops, bistros and hole-in-the-wall restaurants where one could bask in the culinary delights of far away places, where one could walk by small music stores and hear strange music that somehow was not strange at all, where the sidewalk passerby would be constantly beset by sidewalk pitchmen and Gypsy fortune tellers; and where else in this standardized American metropolis could you hear of the wonderful quality and ridiculously low price of the latest fashion in suits extolled to you in Spanish with a Yiddish accent or the Gypsy girls who take one quick size-up and start handing you their con-line in the tongue of your ancestors?

It was not the cleanest of streets, not here in this unclean city, but it was a happy street, happy with the smell of pizza, roasted lamb heads, Turkish coffee, and tacos; happy with the raucous babble of many voices; happy with the voices from the ghettos of Bucaresti, Odessa and Wilno; happy with the voices from Piraeus, Salonika and Plaka; happy with the voices of those who had known only the roof of Rumanian, Hungarian and Serbian skies; happy with the voices from Morelia, Ixtapalapa and Nuevo Laredo; happy with the

\* A stretch of Chicago's Halsted Street between Roosevelt Road and Greek Town was destroyed in the late 1950s/early 1960s to make room for the University of Illinois and the Congress Expressway.



voices from Caguas, Ponce and Arecibo; yes, happy with the voices from Mobile, Beaumont and Chattanooga; happy with the voices from Palermo, Catania and Livorno, a small united nations that somehow wasn't completely united and somehow it didn't make too much difference.

True, it was quite a din but it was a human din, it was a mess but it was a human mess, not like the din that is heard on the Street now, the mechanical roar of the cranes and the mechanical thump of the large ball and the mechanical roar of the bulldozers directed from distant offices, committees and kickback artists with mechanical mentalities and mechanical hearts, and not like the mess left in the wake of the redevelopment juggernaut leaving behind a mess that would put a B-29 to shame.

The rubble creeps up on the last remaining pawnshops, bodegas and pizzerias, the last remaining small haberdasheries, kafenios and taquerias; Street of zucchini, baklava and enchilada, at last you are falling before the advance of standardization; Street of olives, snails and avocados, your days are numbered; Street of chianti, mazel and retsina, of ouzo, arak and tequila with your guitar thumping cantinas and belly-dancing tavernas, those who do not know you have the power to destroy you for behold advancing in the distance following in the wake of the bulldozers and rising above the clouds of dust of your corpse are your brand new tombstones called civic redevelopment; human anthills that look like a combination of cell-block and skyscraper, yes they are building bigger and better tene-

ments that are destined to become bigger and blightier areas.

And you, you good city planners and you fat pocket contractors, when your job is completed and you come down here to look at your accomplishments, are you honestly going to believe you've made any improvement other than in the health of your back pockets?



LAC

## WHAT HAPPENED TO ARMISTICE DAY?

Perhaps a Gold Star can soothe a Mother's aching heart and give solace to a Father's broken dreams;

Perhaps a Gold Star can bring home the bacon and be a companion to a widowed young wife and lie at night between her yearning loins to stifle nocturnal sobs;

Perhaps a Gold Star can be a good pal to those orphaned kids and play with them in the evening and drive them to school, in the morning as they await their time to audition for Gold Stars of their own;

Perhaps a Gold Star can proliferate and multiply until there are so damn many that Fort Knox will be just another hole in the ground and the parasites can have a real ball pointing with pride;

But I don't think y'oughta worry too much about Gold Stars anymore.

You see—

War is being automated!!!

## BALLAD OF A DRAFTEE

He didn't know what it was all about,  
Just out of school and no job and  
Nowhere to go nor anything to go with,  
So when the Board told him he was going  
To travel far, naturally he was thrilled.  
With his spanking new uniform and shiny new gun  
He got on the big boat and began to see  
The World.  
Months later in a steamy hot  
Miserable jungle,  
Sweat pouring down his face  
And his crotch full of lice,  
He still didn't quite know what it was all about  
Nor could he understand why these people  
Whose freedom he was sent to protect  
Were shooting at him.  
And when he felt the impact of the bullet  
In his last split second of consciousness  
He began to wonder.

## REQUIEM FOR 'TWO DAGO REDS'

*Tu Nicola,  
Non sei morto,  
E tu Bartolo,  
Non sei morto,*

Just because they didn't like your ideas  
They hung a rap on you,  
These good upright people  
Of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.  
They tried to tell the World  
That you the fish peddler  
And you the shoe cobbler  
Pulled a heist,

*Ma chi era i brigandi?*

They pulled every dirty trick in the book,  
These upright citizens.  
They really stacked the cards  
Against you two  
Who only wanted to sell fish  
And make shoes  
And tell your fellow workingmen  
Of a better world.

The best legal minds in the country  
Showed where they were wrong  
But the judge kept a deaf ear.  
The Portygee hood who was in the pokey  
With you two  
Who said he didn't care for guinea radicals  
Saw your families come to visit you

And the little kids who wondered  
When their Daddy would come out  
And play with them again,  
Broke down and told the cops  
And told the lawyers  
How you two couldn't have pulled the heist  
But the Judge wouldn't listen.

*Questo vecchio scorpone Thayer,*

He hated foreigners, especially radical ones  
And by the living god of Massachusetts  
And all that was holy  
He was going to see you two burn.  
That's what he boasted as he was playing golf  
While you the fish peddler  
And you the shoe cobbler  
Were sitting in prison  
Away from your families  
And away from the children  
And away from the fellow workingmen  
Whom you loved so well.

*No Nicola, non sei morto*

*E tu Bartolo, non sei morto*

*Ma quant'genti ricordan' il vecchio Thayer?*

They had their way,  
These scions of the witch burners  
And betrayers of the Indians  
Who saved them from starvation,  
These sons of Cotton Mather.  
They shaved your heads  
And strapped you in the chair.

They placed the metal plates on your heads  
And the bands on your limbs  
And turned on the voltage  
And watched you burn!

*Chi era i brigandi?*

*Chi era i scorponi!*

These men who adjusted the bands,  
Who threw the switch,  
Who took you from your homes and people  
And from the World.

This old man

Who in the name of the Commonwealth of  
Massachusetts

Pounded that gavel for the last time.

How many remember their names?

But you, fish peddler

And you, shoe cobbler

The World will not forget you,

*Nostri Fratelli,*

*Nuestro Hermanos,*

*Unsere Brüder,*

*Adelfia Mas.*

Whatever languages, wherever workingmen

Who dream of a better World come together

Your names live on in their hearts.

*No Nicola,*

*No Bartolo,*

*Questo e certo,*

*Non sei morto!*



## SUBURBAN GAL

There she stood in the chill November afternoon  
With the wind whipping at her bare ankles  
Among the small group of people gathered  
By the tomb of the Haymarket Martyrs  
Listening as the impromptu orator  
Told our side of the story.

Later on as we were sitting in the restaurant  
She listened some more as I told of other martyrs  
And how today FBI stooges snap pictures  
Of everyone who walks into a radical meeting  
And I could see that she understood  
Our side of the story.

## AMERICA YOUR FACE IS DIRTY

When your bomb fell  
More had fallen  
Than just a bomb

When you destroyed a city  
More was destroyed  
Than just a city

When you killed thousands  
In one searing flash  
More was lost  
Than just human lives

Among those survivors you left  
Are those who will bear  
the rest of their days  
Gruesome scars  
Almost as gruesome  
As your own invisible  
Scar

You  
O Great Beautiful  
Bargain Counter Democracy  
Ever vigilant against  
Foreign ideology  
Making sure  
Your  
Great light

Shines upon all  
Can you ever wipe from  
Your face the blood  
of  
**HIROSHIMA!!!**

## PEACE WALKERS

Walking,

Walking in spite of the taunts of the conformists  
And the indifferent stares of the apathetic.

Walking

Because somehow they no longer rely on their  
congressmen

And appeals to the highest office.

Walking,

Because among other things,

In the summer of nineteen-forty-five a horrible  
new child was born

On the sandy wastes of New Mexico

And a short time later displayed its horror

On two human cities.

Walking in the hopes of removing the apathy from  
those stares

And the conformity from those conformists.

Walking,

Because the walking they do today

IS ONE LESS WALK

THEIR CHILDREN WILL HAVE TO DO .

## SONG OF THE SECOND CLASS CITIZEN

I whose fathers  
Hunted buffalo on the  
    plains  
And saved the pilgrims  
    from starvation  
Cannot buy a glass of  
    beer  
In my own country,

And

I whose fathers  
Planted the first cornfields  
And built pyramids  
Cannot cross a border  
In my own continent,

And

I whose fathers  
Knew the stench of  
    slaveships  
And with ancestral memories  
Created a new music  
Cannot sit where I please  
In my own world

And

Whenever I open my mouth

I am told to go back  
To where I came from

And

I don't have the fare

Nor

The inclination.

## PURIFICATION

The streets of one-story  
    suburban ranch type. homes  
And their equally conforming  
    naked lawn plots  
Every afternoon  
    at the sound of the  
    last school bell  
Are magically transformed  
    by laughing children.

## REQUIEM CHANT FOR A HALF-BREED WARRIOR

*I was the last Wobbly to see Frank Little alive. I told him the night before: "Frank, they're lookin' fer ye. Git out of Butte!" But he wouldn't move!*

*—Con Lowney, Butte Old Timer*

Like your Warrior Ancestors who rode across the Plains  
You too, rode across those same Plains  
But unlike your Warrior Ancestors who rode their  
    paint ponies,  
A boxcar or a gondola was what you rode.

Like your Warrior Ancestors you never faltered  
No matter how large the enemy's numbers  
For like them, you too were a Warrior.

That Great Western Land that your Ancestors knew  
    so well,  
That golden-grassed white-crowned blue-sky Mother Soil,  
You had seen become a besmudged Hell  
Of soot-grimed Hillsides and squalid miners' camps,  
Of red-eyed miners' wives and pot-bellied miners'  
    children  
And when you saw that, the blood of your Warrior  
    Ancestors  
That flowed through your veins began to boil  
And another Indian was on the War-Path.

For you the lance, the tomahawk and the flintlock  
Were things of the past as your weapon was even  
    greater,

A weapon feared and hated by the enemy the World  
over,

As your weapon was the mightiest one yet:  
The organizing of working men and women  
and the war-cry was **SOLIDARITY!!**

From Copper Hill to the Mesabi and beyond your  
name was known;

Your name was loved by the miners whose struggle was  
yours

And your name was hated by the mine-owners because  
you were

The personification of the miners' struggle.

They feared you, the one-eyed cripple, these big mine  
owners;

And they stopped at nothing in their hopes of  
throwing

Some of their own fear into you.

In Michigan's Iron Range they hung a rope around  
your neck,

Saying they were going to lynch you but you did not  
falter;

And in Superior they kidnapped you and held you  
for days

And when you got away, you went straight to the  
headquarters

Of these steel company goons, parading before them

On your crutches just to show them they could not  
scare you.

During the big strike in Butte when you needed an  
operation



But would not get it before the strike was settled,  
They broke into the rooming house where you were  
sleeping  
And dragged you into the night, submitting you to  
tortures and indignities  
Not even the most warlike Indian would ever stoop to,  
And when they saw they could torture you no longer  
They left your mutilated corpse dangling from a  
railroad trestle,  
And it was they who tasted the bitterness of defeat,  
For not once did you cry out in pain or beg for mercy;  
*Not you, Frank Little, half Indian, half Waichitu,*  
*ALL WOBBLY!!*

They thought by such a deed they would intimidate  
Miners or any other workers who had the guts to  
stand up  
To them, but they were badly shaken at your funeral  
When seven thousand workers marched the Butte streets,  
Miners, farmers, bakers, cooks, streetsweepers,  
Red men, White men . . . any kind of men and women  
And they were all angry and not one damn bit  
intimidated!!

*And when you crossed that last Great Mountain  
Pass  
And came into that last Great Valley,  
Your Warrior Ancestors were there to greet you  
"Welcome, Grandson, You have done us proud!"*

## THE BUGS

When the dinosaurs first trod the antediluvian Earth  
They were here watching  
And being careful not to be stepped upon.

And when those reptilian behemoths  
Perished in the face of the holocaust  
Of the growing pains of an infant Earth  
They were here feasting on their corpses.

When the first mammals made their timid debut  
They were here nesting in their fur  
And burrowing in their skin.

And when a strange new creature walking on two legs  
Came out of the trees to build his cities  
They were here burrowing between the stone and wood  
And luxuriating in his kitchens and sewers.

They were here thriving on smog,  
Thriving in polluted waterways  
And thriving on insecticides and DDT,  
Thriving in soot-blackened cities  
And drought-whitened countrysides;  
They only looked on with mild interest  
As the mushroom clouds began to sprout.  
They are still here.  
But where is man, where is man, WHERE IS MAN?!?!

## CITY OF ANGELS

Like a malignant behemoth amoeba,  
Emerging from the ocean  
Spreading across valleys  
And over mountains  
Corroding the landscape  
With its population  
Explosion;  
Home of the Skid Row Bum  
Plodding his streets  
In a downtown that makes  
Chi's Loop seem clean,  
A real Oakie town  
Where white robed salvationists  
Fleece their flocks  
In architectural monstrosities  
Called Temples of Everlasting  
Mystic Revelation;  
Where oil refinery smoke stacks  
And a million exhaust pipes  
Roaring down the freeways  
Permeate the sea breeze  
With Free Enterprise excrement  
Begatting a bastard child  
That floats over rooftops  
Toward the mountains  
And failing to climb over  
Comes back to creep  
Into the laundry  
Of a million housewives  
And  
In the Food dishes

Of a million puppy dogs  
And  
Into the watery eyelids  
Of a million workingmen  
Driving down endless Freeway  
Caravan subterranean parking  
Lot high rent eternity  
Wistfully gazing toward  
The other side of the ridge  
Where  
Free from the Grey Imminence  
In suburban palaces live  
Cinematic courtesans, Real  
Estate Brokers, Automobile  
Salesmen, and Refinery  
Owners  
Who gaze back down hoping Man will  
Never learn  
To advance with technology.

## SUN CHANT

Driving down endless  
Freeway miles of free  
Enterprise desolation  
The motorists do not know  
A flock of birds fly overhead  
Nor do they care.  
Only a group of small boys  
Standing upon the embankment  
And flying their kites  
Know there is a Universe.

### THREE SPIRITS\*

From the wide-belted wind swept plains  
where the imperceptible sobs of the dead tribesmen  
are lost on the ears of the speeding motorist  
bound on his way toward some intangible oblivion

And over the hump-backed backbone of a continent  
whose deep throated canyons and serpentine  
roadways  
are a strain on the nerves of the speeding motorist  
bound on his way toward some intangible oblivion

To the salt-sprayed meadows and tall evergreen forests  
whose rocky-shored ocean is only another obstacle  
in the path of the speeding motorist  
bound on his way toward some intangible oblivion

The shadows of all the long-gone spirits drift endlessly  
unnoticed by those who are destined to become  
spirits  
but notice everything including the speeding  
motorist  
bound on his way toward some intangible oblivion

And occasionally these spirits stop drifting  
long enough to come together in small groups  
to reminisce of days gone by before they  
become part of the spirit-World

And somewhere on a high scrub-timbered mountain  
slope  
overlooking a sprawling, growing West-country  
metropolis

\* Frank Little, Wesley Everett, Joe Hill

three spirits come together for a short while  
to reminisce of days gone by before they  
became part of the spirit-World

One of them a limping battered half-Indian who in  
Montana

entered the spirit-World at the hands of a mob  
who continued to drag his body over the ground  
long after the breath of life passed out of it,  
another of a soldier from the first great war  
who had been told he was fighting for the freedom  
of all men and because he continued to fight for  
the freedom of all men in his civilian life  
he entered the spirit-World in Washington  
hanging from a trestle with his genitals cut off  
and the third an immigrant who wrote songs  
to inspire the Working men he helped to organize  
and had entered the spirit-World in a Utah prison  
facing a firing squad  
and these three who lived the same hard life and  
died the same violent death for all the same cause,  
this half-breed, this veteran and this Swede,

From their vantage point among the scrub timber  
look down upon the sprawling sea of a city with  
all of  
its factories and its railyards and its supermarkets and  
its apartments and its tenements and homes and the  
streets  
and freeways where run the speeding motorist  
bound on his way toward some intangible oblivion

And they see all the homes of the working men with  
the television aerials and new cars parked in front

with all the modern labor-saving devices inside  
and they reflect on how much has been done since  
they  
became part of the spirit-World

And they also see these working men and their wives  
putting in extra hours of work to keep up the  
payments  
on luxuries that their Grandsires never dreamed of  
while many of their sons go to die in far-off jungles  
and they see how much has yet to be done before  
many more  
become part of the spirit-World

For the time is getting shorter and shorter for this  
slumbering Humanity who have yet so far to travel  
and they hope they won't have to welcome too many  
more spirits who are only trying to open all men's  
eyes  
including the myopic eyes of the speeding motorist  
bound on his way toward some intangible oblivion

But they linger no longer as their restless destinies  
preordain them to drift ever on without end  
and shortly after on the very spot they had rested,  
a bit  
of hard packed mountain soil trembles ever so  
slightly  
to break open where a small green shoot slowly  
emerges  
to gasp hungrily at the clean Mountain air  
high above the thoughts  
and beyond the eyes of the speeding motorist  
bound on his way toward some intangible oblivion



## THE DOWNFALL OF DISEASE-GIVER

Long ago before the God of the Blue Eyes  
Was known by the Tribe,  
The Tribe knew many Gods and Spirits:  
Earth Spirit, Water Spirit, Sky Spirit, Corn Spirit,  
Buffalo Spirit, Fish Spirit, Moon Princess, and many  
others  
Who were believed in and loved by the Tribe.  
Only one Spirit was feared, and that was Disease-Giver,  
Who terrorized everyone.  
Everyone but one crazy young man named Tall Coyote.  
Tall Coyote laughed at Disease-Giver  
And said he did not believe in him.  
So why should he be afraid of him?  
The rest of the Tribe shook their heads sadly, for  
they knew  
For such defiance, Disease-Giver would punish  
Poor crazy Tall Coyote.  
Sure enough, one day Disease-Giver accosted  
Tall Coyote  
In front of all the Tribe, and said to him:  
"Tall Coyote, I have come to kill you!"  
That crazy Tall Coyote, he just laughed and said:  
"Disease-Giver, I don't believe in you; you cannot  
hurt me!"  
Disease-Giver, he got red in the face and told him to die.  
But Tall Coyote kept on laughing.  
Again Disease-Giver told him to die;  
But Tall Coyote kept on laughing.  
After long hours Tall Coyote still laughed;  
And Disease-Giver said: "Tall Coyote, please die!"

But Tall Coyote kept on laughing.  
Disease-Giver said: "Please, Tall Coyote,  
At least have a headache! You are making me lose face!"  
But Tall Coyote laughed harder than ever.  
It was then Disease-Giver decided  
To leave the village of the Tribe  
With his tail between his legs,  
And was never seen again.  
The mind can be a jail, but it can also be a mountain.  
Ey — Yaa!

## THE LAST EXPRESSWAY

In musty old books that are to be found  
In the few libraries that remain  
Can be seen pictures of trees.  
It is said that there were many trees  
In the days before the land was covered  
by one hundred-story apartment houses.  
In days before the final great war  
When the Russians licked the Americans  
Or the Americans licked the Russians  
Or the Chinese licked them both,  
No one seems to remember  
Since most libraries have been replaced  
By one hundred-story apartment houses.  
The construction crews are going to tear up  
The last expressway to make room for  
More one hundred-story apartment houses.  
The last expressway is twenty-five  
Thousand miles long  
But it has nowhere to go.



## SPERANZ!

A small green leaf  
Breaks its way  
Thru a crack in the pavement,

Glories briefly  
In its new-found freedom,  
Then withers;

But the root beneath  
Grows  
Stronger and stronger.

*Also by Carlos Cortez*

# MOTHER JONES



"My address is like my shoes: it travels with me.  
I abide where there is a fight against wrong."

—AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MOTHER JONES

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