You are Chic Now, Che

You are chic now, Che, capital profit to Wall Street and Hollywood; no longer banished to the neighbourhood of spider-webbed streets. Your name no more flies with the spit from cigar-smoking clones of Adam Smith, communist-catching senators of God or C.I.A. spooks with a silent rod; you're as loud in the air as Beethoven's Fifth.

Let's not wrong your vanity: you were rather handsome. Though not a woman, I can tell. Had you taken to rock-and-roll, football, or followed Clint Eastwood, Madison Square Garden would have seen a revolution and your murderers saved from the gas chamber by a Dionysian mob. Your poster-face spiced romance with a guerrilla's gun.

You are so chic now, Che, thirty years after they tumbled you into a toe-dug grave. As might be, by the logic of a brave new world, alchemy of the profiteer. Earth, blind to an American malice, turned your bones to gold, its catalyst
the unbounded love of the dispossessed
whose inhuman griefs grown too tall, obsessed

your blood, raced your feet to distant places
where, vile armies viler, your death had been sooner. Such armies, Che, in the new lean
world of market-made hope, hold the aces.
Oh, pardon me, a few things right away:
the Berlin Wall crumbled and Communist Europe fell. Comrade Gorbachev, labour's last Pope
preached perestroika and withered away

the Warsaw pact. The Union of Soviets
(now only Russia), China, Che, and all
the workers' states turn to the shopping mall,
swear by the Stock Exchange. Their old helmets
on, Castro and the Rest of the Twelve
bluff the storm. But he's old now, so is Raul
and you're dead, Che, while America—call
it unfair—stalks still Havana's shy shelf.

So, you see why you could make Wall Street,
why McCarthy will not turn in his grave?—
no one else stands in the ring, out to save
dignity from the auction block. Bread, meat,
the opium of a consumer culture,
together with commodity-Che, will cure
classless hungers. And we are to leave to time
this defilement of the dead, this added crime?