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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?