

The Machine

by Amado V. Hernandez

Progress took on Mercury's wings
after man discovered fire,
after man invented the wheel;
the turtle was left far behind; revolution
kept pace with the rumble of industry.

Labor in the fields, in factory, in home,
that once relied on human hands,
now is accelerated, intensified
through the miracle of the machine,
everything tends to multiply and prosper.

Jungles are cleared, mountains leveled;
fallow fields turn fertile; barren soil is plowed;
printing arrives;
land, water, and air are conquered:
what man has wrought is a challenge to God!

By chance we seem to have discovered those things
that were able to improve the conditions of our lives;
but simultaneously
we fashioned weapons of war,
and men became the destroyers of men!

Electricity, radio, the atom—the magic
of all modern artifacts;
the sun of capitalism penetrating everywhere
and becoming in the clear light
the most efficient killer of man.

Because the machine became property
that could be captured—like land, like money—
we saw machines enslaving men,
instead of being their deliverers.

How heavy the cost of the Machine, our lord,
as man becomes a buffalo with a rope through his nose!
O civilization,
when will the apocalypse arrive
on earth, when will man assert his dominion?

O man, freedom is tied to the stake,
only your hands can liberate her.
The time is ripe for
all grey spirits to perish. Is it God or the Machine
that enchains you, child of Prometheus?