

# The Worker Hero

*by Amado V. Hernandez*

I am a worker: one grain of the sands  
that fill up the ruts, but also build the temples.  
Perhaps I owe my life to God,  
but my lot is a debt to myself.  
I know the law: "Man, from your own sweat  
you will earn your daily bread."

I erected Greece and Rome,  
I destroyed arrogant Troy:  
my hands are hammers, weapons to create  
and destroy at will.  
If you see before you any products of labor,  
It was I who shaped them, gave them birth.

I am the monarch without throne or crown,  
a master who must always obey another.  
How many lucky men have I helped enrich,  
while I myself remained hungry?  
How many stood upon my shoulders?  
My orphans have become Mammon and Nabob. . .

. . . All the buildings, streets and vehicles  
were wrought by my hands of steel;  
by the power I discovered—oil, coal, iron—  
industry and commerce performed miracles;  
but the gap between my life and property  
widened . . . and my life has been subjugated.

To deprive my person of dignity  
was the work of scheming minds;  
but gold will indubitably remain gold,  
fragrance of earth will elude concealment;  
and if I am negated by the corruptors,  
who will deny the final judgment of history?