



CARLOS BULOSAN

Collected Poems

MIGRATION, LABOR, WAR, AND THE AMERICAN PROMISE

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

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ARCHIVAL IMAGES

Portrait, migration, publications, and documentary witnesses



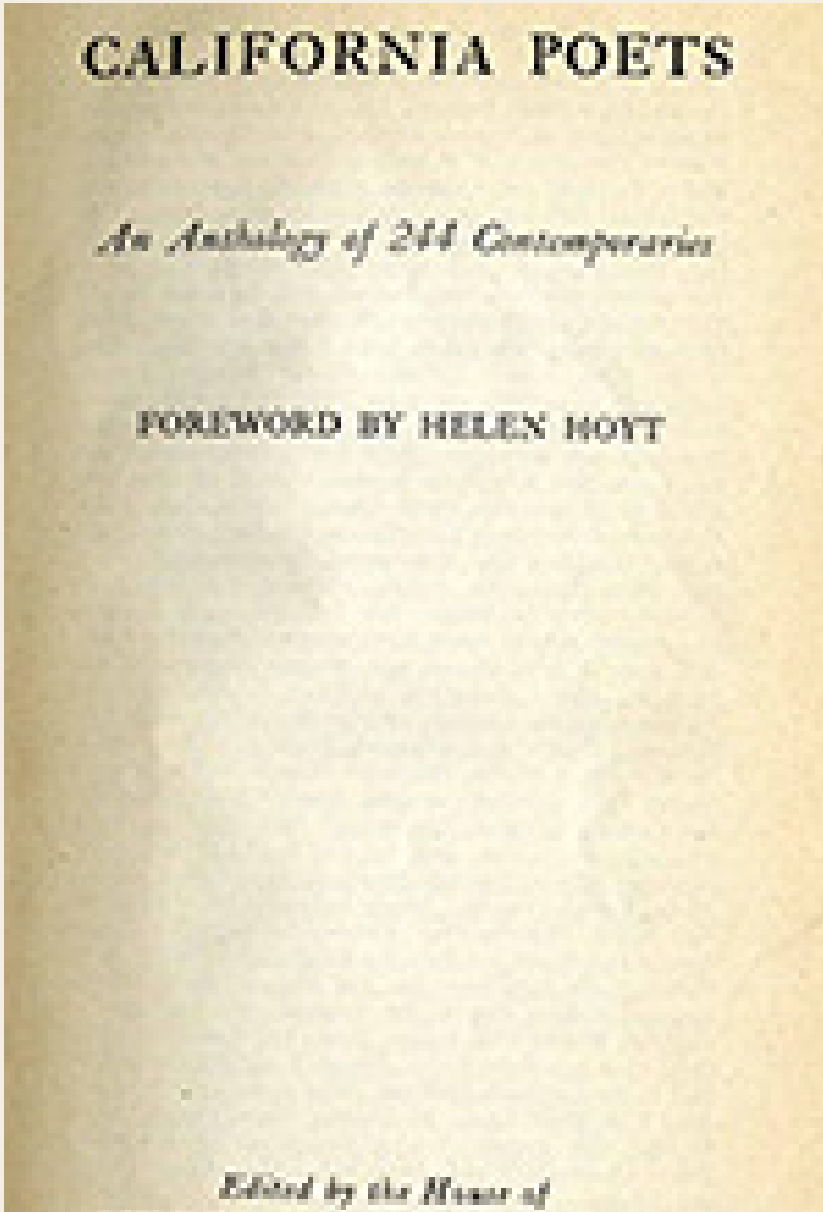
Carlos Bulosan, circa 1940s. University of Washington Libraries, Carlos Bulosan Papers.



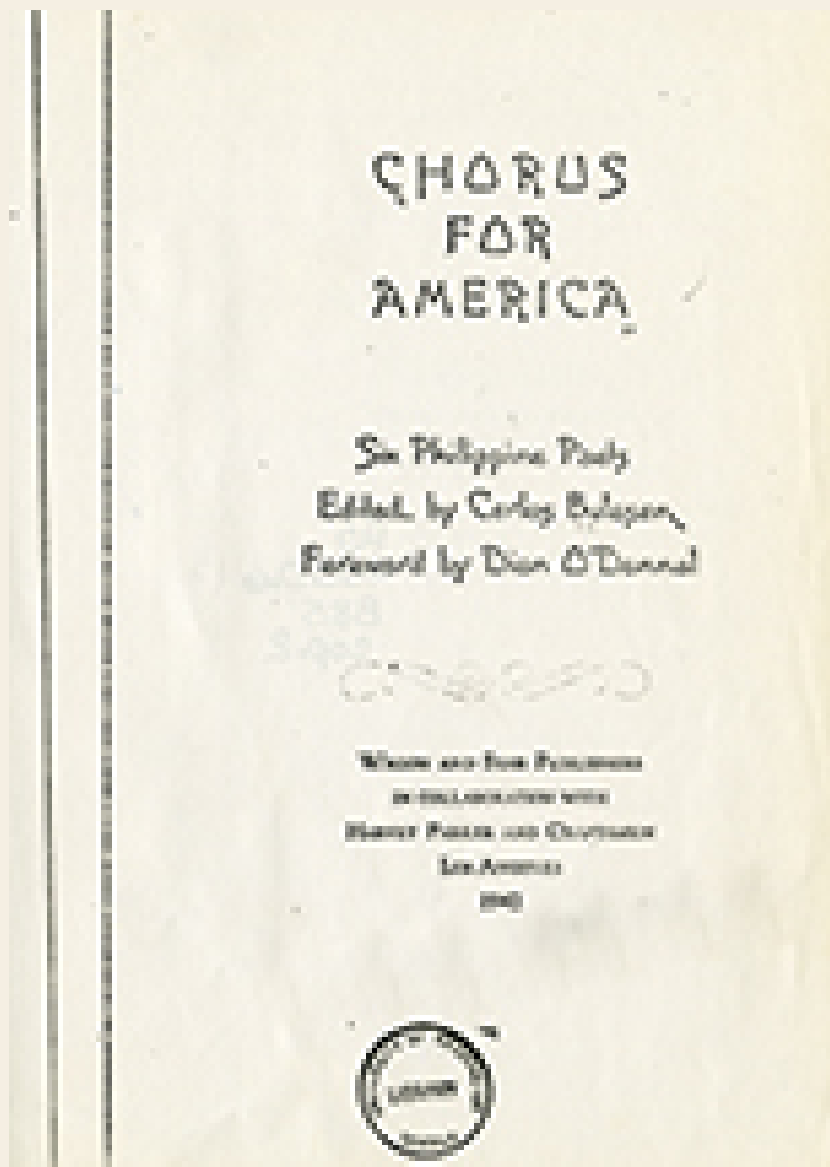
Menu from the S.S. President Taft, the ship on which Bulosan arrived in Seattle on June 13, 1930. University of Washington Libraries.



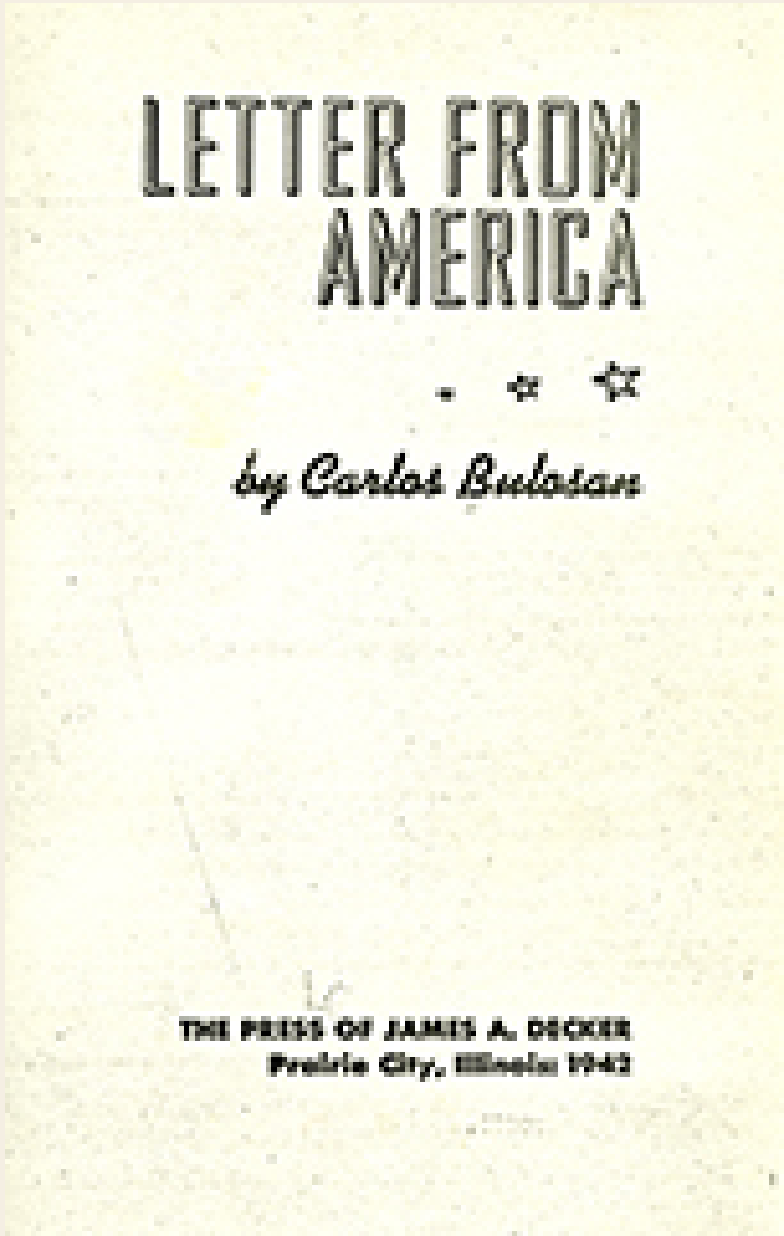
Filipino migrant workers near Stockton, California, circa 1930. University of Washington Libraries.



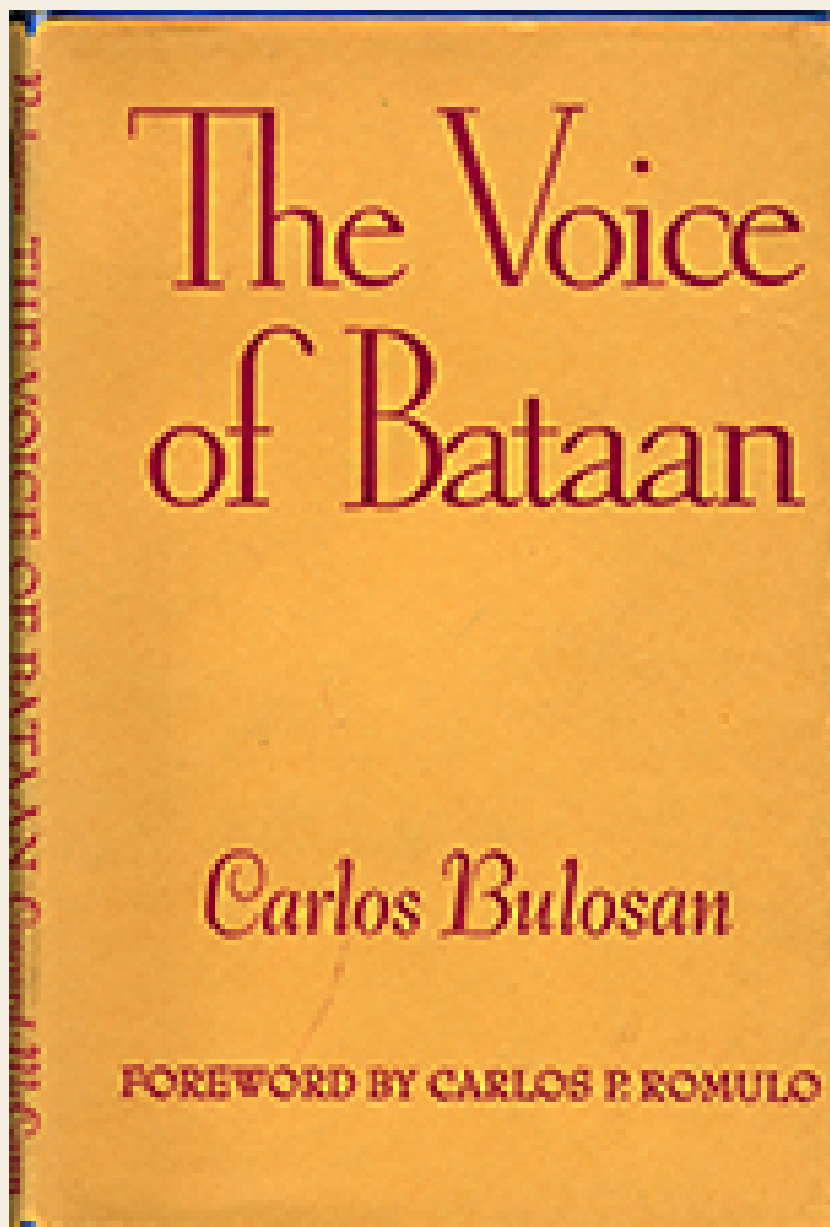
Cover of *California Poets* (1932), which printed Bulosan's first four located United States poems.



Cover of *Chorus for America* (1942), edited by Bulosan and published by Dion O'Donnol's Wagon & Star Press.



Cover of *Letter from America* (1942). A complete readable copy was not located for this edition.



*Cover of *The Voice of Bataan* (1943), the base text for the long wartime sequence.*

INTRODUCTION

Migration, collective voice, and the American promise

Carlos Bulosan crossed the Pacific in 1930 and spent the next twenty-six years turning migrant labor, racial violence, illness, anti-colonial politics, and friendship into a literature of collective survival. After seasonal work and organizing on the West Coast, long hospital stays in Los Angeles gave him time to read and write; by wartime he was publishing in *Poetry*, editing *Chorus for America* with Dion O'Donnol's Wagon & Star Press, and addressing a national audience through "Freedom from Want." His verse moves from brief imagist lyrics and haunted self-portraits to the mass voice of *The Voice of Bataan*, while repeatedly testing whether America can become the democracy it promises. This edition resets the fourteen recovered *Poetry* poems, the five-poem *Chorus for America* sequence, and the complete *Voice of Bataan*, preserving their order, stanza structure, sectioning, and publication history. The four poems known from the 1932 anthology *California Poets* and the collection *Letter from America* remain documented but are not reproduced without readable primary witnesses.

BIOGRAPHY

A life reconstructed from publications, archives, family records, and friends' papers

Birth, family, and a disputed chronology

Carlos Sampayan Bulosan was born in the farming barrio of Mangusmana, in or near Binalonan, Pangasinan, in the American-colonial Philippines. Even the date is unsettled. Bulosan supplied different years and dates during his life; the Seattle death certificate records November 24, 1911, while many reference works repeat November 24, 1913. The authority record derived from Susan Evangelista's family research and a baptismal record gives February 11, 1911. A nephew and childhood companion later remembered November 2. This edition uses February 11, 1911 provisionally and keeps the disagreement visible rather than converting a contested record into false certainty.

Bulosan grew up in an Ilocano farming family whose experience of debt, tenancy, schooling, and colonial power later became raw material for his fiction and poetry. The family members in *America Is in the Heart* are literary constructions rather than transparent documentary portraits, so their names and histories cannot simply be transferred into a biography. What remains consistent across family testimony, archival records, and Bulosan's own writing is the pressure of rural poverty, the importance of older brothers who pursued education or migrated, and his early conviction that reading and writing could oppose the ignorance imposed by hardship. The dedication of *The Voice of Bataan* remembers his brother Aurelio teaching the "little sick brother" to read by lamplight and teaching him that misery in a land of abundance is a crime.

Migration and the West Coast

Bulosan left the Philippines in 1930. The passenger record for the *S.S. President Taft* places his arrival in Seattle on June 13, a firmer date than the July dates repeated in later summaries. Like thousands of Filipino colonial subjects who entered the continental United States before the Tydings–McDuffie Act restricted migration, he moved through a racialized labor system that treated Filipino men as a disposable workforce. He worked or sought work in Washington, Alaska, Oregon, and California—in canneries, fields, hotels, restaurants, and other casual jobs—and encountered beatings, exclusion, low wages, and anti-Filipino violence.

The record of these years is partly archival and partly literary. *America Is in the Heart* draws on migrant routes, labor camps, strikes, and attacks that Bulosan knew, but reorganizes people and events to create a collective history. The narrator “Carlos” is not a stenographic self. Later scholars, especially Marilyn Alquizola and Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, have shown how the book’s composite method speaks for a generation while resisting the expectations of conventional autobiography. The distinction matters: the book remains indispensable evidence of social conditions and political imagination, but individual incidents require corroboration before they become biographical fact.

First publications and radical culture

Bulosan was publishing in English within two years of his arrival. Under the name Carl Bulosan, four poems—“Alien Wind,” “Destiny,” “Greenery,” and “Immortality”—appeared on pages 103–105 of *California Poets: An Anthology of 244 Contemporaries* in 1932. The anthology is catalogued and its cover survives online, but the relevant pages are restricted or available only as unreadable snippets; this edition therefore records rather than reconstructs them. Their early date corrects the familiar story that Bulosan discovered literature only after illness removed him from manual labor.

In 1934 Bulosan helped produce *The New Tide*, a short-lived proletarian literary magazine made with Filipino labor radicals including Chris Mensalvas. Its declared purpose was to translate workers’ struggles and hopes, and the fight against fascism and racism, into concrete social experience. Bulosan’s writing and organizing increasingly occupied the same cultural front. He

participated in efforts to organize farm and cannery workers and formed lasting friendships with Mensalvas, Ponce Torres, Ernesto Mangaoang, and others whose union work later centered on Seattle's Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers Union.

Los Angeles offered a second political and literary network. Bulosan entered the circle around the Stanley Rose Bookshop, where writers and activists such as Carey McWilliams, Louis Adamic, John Fante, Dorothy Babb, and Sanora Babb met. The Babb sisters visited and supported him during long periods of hospitalization between 1936 and 1938. His poem-sequence title "The Young Man Lost" is dedicated to Dorothy Babb, and later fiction transformed the sisters into the Odell women. Their friendship joined material care, reading, political conversation, and the practical work of getting manuscripts into print.

Illness and the *Poetry* poems

Tuberculosis and related illness repeatedly interrupted Bulosan's working life. Hospitalization in Los Angeles gave him access to sustained reading and writing, but it should not be romanticized as a simple apprenticeship: it involved pain, dependency, surgery, uncertainty, and the fear of permanent disability. The body in his poems is therefore both historical and intimate—an "empty lung," fever, hunger, the threatened hand, the room above the stairs—and bodily injury becomes a way of registering class and racial violence.

Between 1936 and 1942 Harriet Monroe's *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* published fourteen located poems by Bulosan. The February 1936 group, headed "The Unknown Quantity," includes "Without Ceremony," "Letter from America," "In Time of Drought," "Secret," "No Story," and "Monuments." The September 1937 sequence "The Young Man Lost" contains "Biography," "Night Piece," "Needing No Time," and "The Phoenix." "These Are Also Living" followed in August 1938. In April 1942 *Poetry* printed "Letter in Exile," "Sunset and Evening Star," and "American History." The source credits shift from Carl to Carlos Bulosan, quietly preserving the transition in his public name.

These magazine poems already contain the central tensions of Bulosan's mature work: memory against history, city wealth against hunger, private loneliness against collective action, and an America loved as a possibility but

experienced as an injury. “American History” places the last statements of Sacco and Vanzetti inside a Filipino migrant’s account of radical inheritance. “These Are Also Living” turns a cold rented room into a vantage on hungry men moving through the streets. “Letter in Exile” measures brothers separated by migration against the global machinery of war and racism.

Wartime books and national attention

American entry into the Second World War altered the public position of Filipinos in the United States. The defense of Bataan made the Philippines newly visible as an ally, while the wartime Popular Front temporarily widened the space available to left writers. Bulosan’s most concentrated period of book publication followed. In 1942 J. A. Decker issued the sixty-eight-page *Letter from America* in Prairie City, Illinois. A readable complete copy has not been located for this project, so its poems are not silently reconstructed from later selections.

The same year Bulosan edited *Chorus for America: Six Philippine Poets* for Dion O’Donnol’s Wagon & Star Publishers in West Los Angeles. The book placed Bulosan beside José García Villa, R. Zulueta da Costa, and other Philippine poets, with O’Donnol arguing that their work clarified what democracy must mean in practice. Bulosan’s closing five-poem sequence—beginning with “The Face of the War” and ending with “Death and Transfiguration”—moves from fatal rumor and aerial bombardment toward a collective rising against loneliness. The volume is also evidence of a Filipino–Los Angeles small-press collaboration that wartime disruption cut short.

The Voice of Bataan appeared in 1943 under the auspices of the American-Philippine Foundation. Its preface by E. Llamas Rosario and foreword by Carlos P. Romulo frame the book as part of the Allied war effort, but Bulosan’s poem is less stable than patriotic occasion verse. Soldiers, prisoners, civilians, exiles, a Japanese conscript, and an unknown father speak across national roles. Its recurring claim that freedom is indivisible connects resistance to fascism abroad with labor, racial equality, hunger, colonial domination, and the right to speak at home. The dedication to Aurelio makes the public epic answerable to a brother’s private acts of care.

Bulosan reached his largest contemporary audience through “Freedom from Want,” published in the *Saturday Evening Post* on March 6, 1943 as part of the Four Freedoms series. Norman Rockwell’s image shows a prosperous white family around a Thanksgiving table; Bulosan’s text speaks instead from workers, migrants, the dispossessed, and those excluded from abundance. The tension made the essay a durable alternative statement of American democracy. The University of Washington exhibit preserves the story that Bulosan nearly lost the manuscript during a night in a Tacoma bar.

Fiction, composite autobiography, and postwar politics

The Laughter of My Father became a bestseller in 1944. Its short tales use folktale structures, grotesque comedy, and family trickster figures; Bulosan at different times described them as modernized folklore and as satire, and readings that treat them as quaint ethnography miss their attacks on colonial and class relations. *America Is in the Heart* followed in 1946. Its movement from Pangasinan to the migratory West made it the defining literary account of the prewar Filipino American generation, although its hybrid of testimony, fiction, collective biography, and political education resists the simpler label “autobiography.”

The Cold War narrowed the publishing space that had opened during the war. Bulosan’s radical associations brought federal surveillance, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation assembled a file that is now only partially available. Immigration authorities targeted the left leadership of Seattle’s cannery workers union and tried to deport officers including Mensalvas, Mangaoang, Torres, Joe Prudencio, and Casimiro Absolor. Bulosan wrote in their defense and sold “I Want the Wide American Earth” to raise funds for the legal campaign. The officers ultimately defeated the deportation effort, but it consumed union money and energy.

In 1952 Bulosan served as publicity director and editor of the yearbook for Cannery Workers Local 37, then affiliated with the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union. The appointment was controversial because he had not worked in the Alaska canneries, yet his long relationship with the organizers and his ability to shape a public record made the role consequential. The yearbook documents the union’s multiethnic

history, deportation defense, civil-rights work, and vision of labor culture. It is among the most important works Bulosan edited, and an original scan is preserved with this edition's research files.

Seattle, friendship, and the last manuscripts

Bulosan returned to Seattle to stay in the early 1950s at the invitation of Ponce Torres and Chris Mensalvas. Recurrent tuberculosis led to a year at Firland Sanatorium in 1952. Torres, Mensalvas, Mangaoang, and other members of the left community visited him; Frontier Books helped provide newspapers and reading matter. Josephine Patrick, whom he met through a union event, became a particularly close friend and romantic partner. Her preserved scrapbook and correspondence now form an essential part of the University of Washington microfilm collection.

The archive records a surge of late poems, plays, prose, and letters: "The Oak Tree," "My Country," "Landscape with a Bottle," "Song for Chris Mensalvas' Birthday," "The Vaulted Wall," the Rizal play, and dozens more. It also points to unfinished or lost projects. Bulosan reportedly worked on a novel about Seattle's Skid Road and began other manuscripts that disappeared after his death. The surviving title lists make clear that the poems reprinted in this volume are not his complete poetic output; they are the complete set presently reset from the readable published witnesses in the project folder.

His final years were marked by serious illness, alcoholism, unstable housing, and continued generosity to friends and political causes. He stayed with Torres, Mensalvas, Patrick, or in the union hall and lived in single-room hotels including the Morrison and Holland. These conditions did not mean that he stopped writing. Shortly before his death he had received support described by the University of Washington exhibit as a Carnegie Institute fellowship and was again concentrating on his work.

Death, archives, and literary afterlife

On September 11, 1956, after an evening with a labor-lawyer friend, Bulosan collapsed in Seattle's City Hall Park, across from the Holland Hotel where he was living. He died that evening of pneumonia. The death certificate records Seattle, September 11, the Holland Hotel address, Philippine birth, and burial at Mount Pleasant Cemetery. Friends held a memorial in the Local 37 union hall before the burial. The certificate's birth entry is part of, not a solution to, the larger conflict over his age.

Bulosan's papers survived because friends, union colleagues, relatives, librarians, and scholars gathered them. The University of Washington's Manuscript Committee collected materials after his death; the microfilm guide includes manuscripts held by the university, Josephine Patrick, Aurelio Bulosan, and the University of Chicago. Aurelio's papers preserve fifteen letters from Carlos, reminiscences, memorials, and family material. The partial FBI file, the Local 37 yearbook, death certificate, clippings, and correspondence together allow a life to be reconstructed beyond the necessarily transformed version in his fiction.

The University of Washington Press reissued *America Is in the Heart* in 1973, helping establish it in Asian American studies and American literary history. Posthumous books widened the record: *Sound of Falling Light: Letters in Exile* (1960), *The Philippines Is in the Heart* (1978), *If You Want to Know What We Are* (1983), *The Cry and the Dedication* (1995), and *On Becoming Filipino* (1995). Scholarship by Susan Evangelista, P. C. Morante, E. San Juan Jr., Marilyn Alquizola, Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, Augusto Espiritu, and many others has continued to debate his biography, politics, genre, and place in the transpacific left.

CARLOS P. ROMULO'S FOREWORD

The original introduction to The Voice of Bataan (1943)

When I read his article on one of the Four Freedoms in the *Saturday Evening Post* I asked: 'Who is this Carlos Bulosan?' I learned he was a young Filipino living in Los Angeles, California, and was also given to understand that he is a common laborer. I waited impatiently to hear what so authoritative a voice would say next. Strong new voices are needed to weld the increasing need of understanding between East and West. Both America and our Philippines needed the new voice of Carlos Bulosan.

I had not long to wait. *The Voice of Bataan* is between the covers of this book and it holds all I had hoped for and more. From the first line it is poetry. It is also Bataan. Neither of Occident nor Orient, these poems speak with the universal words of mankind. Bulosan's poetry is gusty and powerful and unfamiliar, new and clear as lucite and yet ageless as his 'deathless peace that ancestors carved in stone.'

Here is great poetry and here is one of the great poems of the war. Here are Lidice and *The White Cliffs*. Supplanting those British crags are the 'scarred beaches' of Bataan; displacing the deathless dead of Lidice are our nameless boys with the 'anonymous limbs that walked to God.' Yes, here is Bataan, in measures of beauty instead of bloodshed and cordite—a song to be heard through tears. In it are the tears our bravest leaders shed on Bataan where they watched the lines pushed back and the youthful dead piled high.

The Voice of Bataan is made up of some half dozen long poems and each is different in structure and content and all are beautiful. 'Escape' is a poem that tears at the memory and another, 'Unknown Soldier,' is a prayer in song no one could read without tears who has ever dared hope for a fairer and sweeter world for his children.

As authentic and lovely as any song in English literature is ‘Interlude,’
dropped softly into the blood and beauty of the war strophe:

*My dear, when you come back,
look for me in the familiar day.
Look under the sound of the wind,
and in the vast tracks of the sky.*

*The world divides in my heart,
and the future is a knife in my hand.*

There is the resonance of Sandburg and Amy Lowell in Bulosan and the love of sound that has made our own Filipino literature distinctive. But beyond all this it is new—it is Bulosan. He has given us words at last to ease the souls of our unburied dead on Bataan. In this book I find lines for bronze to keep memorable that place of blood and sacrifice. Words for our nameless Filipino-American dead:

*Bataan! The last island of freedom.
The star of all our living pride.
Bataan! A world! Immortality!*

*Build upon their graves
The foundations of a new world. Every grass
That grows untrampled is a flag of freedom.*

Carlos P. Romulo

EDITORIAL NOTE AND SOURCES

Scope, witnesses, and the limits of the recovered corpus

This is a reset critical reading edition, not a facsimile. It gathers every Bulosan poem for which this project holds a readable, verified original publication witness: fourteen poems from *Poetry* (1936–42), five from *Chorus for America* (1942), and the full verse text of *The Voice of Bataan* (1943). Narrow-page hanging wraps have been rejoined; section order, stanza structure, capitalization, and meaningful indentation are preserved. Obvious OCR errors were corrected against the page images. Source notes follow every work.

Four poems published in *California Poets* in 1932—“Alien Wind,” “Destiny,” “Greenery,” and “Immortality”—are documented but not included because the anthology pages remain inaccessible in readable form. *Letter from America* (1942) is likewise verified as a sixty-eight-page book, but no complete scan was recovered. Dozens of later manuscripts listed in the University of Washington microfilm guide require consultation of the archival originals and, where applicable, permissions. Their omission is therefore an editorial boundary, not a claim that this volume contains every poem Bulosan wrote.

The public-domain determination is work-specific. HathiTrust expressly marks *The Voice of Bataan* public domain. No matching book renewal was located for the 1942 *Chorus for America* material in the 1970 renewal table, and the contribution-level renewal index for *Poetry* does not list Bulosan’s poems. Copies of the source scans and the searched renewal records are retained in the production folder.

POETRY MAGAZINE POEMS

Fourteen poems published in Poetry, 1936–1942

Without Ceremony

Hurriedly the crowd disappeared at the street's end.
Forever the curious faces look and stare, obscuring,
Leaving the possible truth unseen—
Open and big faces are nothing but blurred images.
These are faces that are saddened by the spying years,
Faces that once gleamed with a surge of promise
And strength, strength tautened with reservations.
From the deep tunnel of winter ploughing,
I see faces growing fragmentary with stale careers.

Under the furious triumph of winter rain, the mind
Quickens. A little leakage of memory fills, drains,
And opens a new wound of queer poignancy.
From the savage lines of faces, it moves, coils,
And sets a fire. Thought is like a mountain storm
Threatening the hunters.

How steep is time,
How deep is sleep—

Publication. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 47, no. 5 (February 1936), 263.

Letter from America

You write that in the Far East where you are
They cut down the trees and leveled them to the ground
Where fire stood and laughed and screamed, where birds
Flocked to partake with the festival, but were silenced
By the barking of guns; and their story is the history
Of leaves when inviolate guerdons shake the trees.
You tell me that the mountains are tunneled, the hills
Dug out and thrown into the rivers, and the rivers
Are emptied; you tell me that the fields are planted
With camps, houses, buildings, and the garden where
We had gathered roses for the queen of spring
Is now a stable for horses, and our house is a sleeping
Quarters for soldiers.
You ask me why, and what shall I say?
What could I say in words?
I sit here fingering actualities, thinking of what
Cities I have seen indistinguishably—like rain;
But could I answer your questions with these?
In any case you would not approve of pictures,
And this makes us one. For in this city where
The streets scream for life, where men are hunting
Each other with burning eyes, mountains are made of sand,
Glass, paper from factories where death is calling
For peace; hills are made of clothes, and trees
Are nothing but candies.
In these we are almost the same. And now that I look
Out of the window I see our America bleeding.
I do not know of any answer to tell you.

Publication. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 47, no. 5 (February 1936), 263–64.

In Time of Drought

To sit in silence is like watching the night
Spread over the land and the winds are sliding by
In an unmistakable whisper; to stand and wander in
The evening is like fingering our eyes in the dark.

Come to the valley and listen to the sharp call
Of tuber roots; and red tiger lilies are bravely shouldering
Their delicate thinness above the parched earth,
Crying for rain.

Let us wait late tonight and see how naked we appear
Under no sun, how unutterably defeatable we are
By the razor cry of exhaustion, of our body's strange
History. For such is the excess of our desire:
We surrender, being whipped by futilities.

From this dread doom, there is an escape to no conflict;
This is only a cloud of smoked realities....
And now I hear the temporal cry of the loam, of birds
Sluicing the late evening air, hushing the land,
And the leaves are signaturing the approach of winter.
Nothing is more exquisite than the silver scream
Of the starved earth awakening to the thistles of rain,
Life answering life. I knew this from the easy
Stir of blood answering blood, of roots outstaying
The rose, and the sharpened slant of a tree without leaves.
Tonight the faint clash of earth is answering silence.

Publication. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 47, no. 5 (February 1936), 265.

Secret

Your face is as big as a seed,
But you do not bear fruit
To complete the meaning of your name;
Like the night that spreads
Over the sea with thick wings
But has no body
To tell of its existence.

Publication. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 47, no. 5 (February 1936), 266.

No Story

Grass repeats the story of the wind. It bends
Down on glassy knees and whispers to the earth.
The earth laughs lovelily and poisons its leaves.
But this snow quieter than grass under rain, what does
It tell of the sun? It is spineless. When the sun burns
Its stoves, it emerges into the earth.
It has nothing to tell, but it gives the words
Of a story that the earth whispers to the grass.

Publication. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 47, no. 5 (February 1936), 266.

Monuments

All night the sea rushed in monosyllables
To the shore, where rocks and reefs loomed
Majestically and silence stood without shoes;
And the foam crept to the edges of darkness
Burning its inflammable garments, whereon
Water activities showed delight and humor.

Silence, imperial silence, I have felt your beauty
In the hour of formlessness; it cupped me up
Like an autumn wind moving into space.
Monumental silence, I too have something to tell,
I too have a passion to arise, and the honor
To possess this passion—

All night the sea rushed in silence and knelt
In the darkness, complaining in monosyllables.

Publication. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 47, no. 5 (February 1936), 266–67.

Biography

For Dorothy Babb

There was no end of sadness.
When winter came and sprawled over
The trees and houses, a man rose from
His sleep and kissed his wife who wept.
A child was born. Delicately the film
Of his life unfolded like a coral sea,
Where stone is a hard substance of wind
And water leaking into memory like pain.

He was a young man. He looked at himself
Through a glass that was too real to image
His face, unreal before his eyes. These were vivid
To the hands; these were too real
To the hearts that bled to sustain life,
He was a man. And the sun that leaped
Into his eyes, the grass beneath his feet
That walked cobbled streets, the cities—
All were a challenge to his imagination:
But his mother decaying in a nameless grave,
And his father watching a changing world
Through iron bars, and his broken childhood,
Were as real as pain locking memory.

Publication. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 50, no. 6 (September 1937), 326.

Night Piece

Mysterious, profound, mute,
The night sprawls under the moonlight—
Knotless cables tied to the streets,
Synergy of truth ever present, giving
Time to what Hope delays!
O City of strangled throats and deep-set eyes,
Give meaning to the muffled cry of millions
Who perish behind screened windows, answer
The namelessness of these young faces!

We have touched the moonlight,
As if drawn together by the silence of stars!
Drawn together by the weight of our loneliness!
And our fear fled into nothingness;
Became our faith wrapped in moonlight—
Remembered beauty salvaged from the ruins
Of our scattered births!

Who can unfasten the moonlight...?

Publication. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 50, no. 6 (September 1937), 327.

Needing No Time

Needing no time for mourning over
Vanished splendors, the future receives
Us into its inner reality where
The movietone of memory is a mimicry
Of gleaming cities and other discoveries;
Where the past is a sunset of pale clouds
Consumed by history now buried in the ages.
We stand in a sunset and gawk at the sun,
Choking ourselves with our dusty cries.

We want the past to jump into our pockets,
We want to jingle it at our pleasure, knowing
That this is the way life clings to love,
This is the way faith comes to life—
A perfume spreading in the spreading day.
The flight of hours into the year tells
Us that the past is a heap of burned leaves,
And we cannot have it with empty hands
Clutching at the fugitive winds of earth,
Cannot want it in our march into the morning.
The past is past, and we cannot remake it.
If we cannot remake it, we do not need it.
If we do not need it, there is nothing to fear.
If there is nothing to fear, it is worth destroying.
The future is for hoping, and we want it.
If we want it, we can have it.
If we can have it, it is all.
If it is all, it is worth fighting for it.
This is the way we face the coming day.
This is the way we stand in the sunset
And gawk at the sun, needing no time
For mourning in our march into the morning.

Publication. Poetry: *A Magazine of Verse* 50, no. 6 (September 1937), 327–28.

The Phoenix

Gigantic buildings of our day,
Tall towers that the winds know,
Dark Flower! betray
This secret and my sorrow....

Into the streets of sheltered rooms,
Where sleepers sleep with grief,
Where night looms
Majestically like death;

O Dark Mother, mute with pity,
Creep in with a new faith
And tell us what glory
Is there on the earth of bleached

Bodies and choked mirth:
My faith nailed to the wall
Of my strange birth—
Phoenix carved in my soul!

Publication. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 50, no. 6 (September 1937), 329.

These Are Also Living

After the dreary walk and the tinsel city
That thrusts its tongue hollowly into the night;
After the crowded streets and the tenement houses,
Where the lost and the dying flash mocking eyes
With indelicate movements, waiting for death;
After the flight of water-soaked steps and dark halls,
The uneven door and the cold room above the stairs,
The anger in your face settles down—suddenly—
Your lips tremble as we look into the street below,
Where hungry men are passing into the night, moving
Close to the buildings for warmth and comfort.
These are also living men, thrown as we are thrown
Into the troubled room of earth, crying for bread.
Their continuous procession into the dark streets
Lifts a stabbing arrow of pity, striking your eyes,
Pushing a nervous wave through your rain-soaked body.
Why are you sobbing profusely? We too are hungry.

Publication. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 52, no. 5 (August 1938), 259.

Letter in Exile

Hourly the planes scour the skies to chart
The unchartered defenses of their loved country.
It is summer and the loaded steamers will soon
Unload upon the waiting piers to fill the needs
Of cities laid bare to the deep hunger of the years;
While the rolling valleys move their living
Shoulders of even glades, caught in the palms
Of the indiscriminating sun, begot of the seas.

All these seem to concentrate in their way:
The light that slants to this little tree here,
The effusive drone of the unstopped faucet,
The pen I use, the complicated course of my passion;
Every moment and thought; all moments, all thoughts.
Their sons enter night-clubs; they throw money to waiters;
Bright virgin girls moan in their beds; they dream
Of freedom in bubbles of drunkenness and insanity.

Knowing the tremendous apparatus of this great
Mistake, I think of our favorite islands
Cupped in those dove-like waiting seas,
And our paternal homestead where intriguing
Brothers and silent sisters met at meal-time
To exhibit all types of affection and courtesy.
We were passionate in those days. Our affectionate
Family allowed no sensual amusements.

Recalling all these before the hour of noon,
I thought of you, brother, and wished you
Could watch with me the splendid glide
Of limousines in this street, and in that other,
The endless parade of hungry men and women
Who approached my window at dawn to remind
Me once more of the coughing orbit of life
In this wide land, their loved country.

We didn't have the artist's vision nor the hangman's
Dream to twist the whole of living on our finger;
But in those islands, under common trees we spoke
Of the littlest things with the simplest joy.

There were no books and hard intellectual thoughts,
But we grew into manhood with the music of trees
In our hearts that would not break, breaking
At last to the barrenness of hard city streets.

All of it was anxiety. All the years that passed
For me. And I am still facing a greater anxiety:
The promised happiness that would never come to me.
Ten years for me and twelve for you, and that other,
The other young brother who could not find himself,
Fifteen years—and he was only a child when he came.
But we are still here burning with a thousand fevers,
Though now more discerning, the enemy close at hand.

I was God's wonder boy: but if I did not
Defy the greed of mad men, if I did not save
Beauty from the naked blasphemies of money,

You must know that I cried when the Jews
Were driven from their country, when the Negroes
Were burned in their homes. You must know
That with these feeble hands I crept to the window,
Unashamed to die in a world gone mad with power.

It will pass away. There is an end to everything.
Power and greed will ravage beauty and give us
Loneliness. But the sadness will come to pass.
So live the New Year flooding the city with noises,
Like tragic noises of revolution, reaching me
Like a heart-stroke. All will move forward on
The dangerous course of history that never stops
To rectify our tragic misgivings and shame.

Publication. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 60, no. 1 (April 1942), 12–14.

Sunset and Evening Star

Winter and sublime terror to the poor.
And my gentle brother who was sick in bed
Turned to the broken window and the thick
Fog that weakened the sun, twisting visions
Of our early days in the little grass house.
He spoke of our other brother, the one who died
Hating greed and money; the native village
And the immigrants who went to settle there.

I sat and listened. Sometimes a bold image
Evoked complete surrender. I would scream
Fearing the lost was lost forever, till the noise
Submerged the trembling voice again.

About this dream-world of our early long days
The October dream-world of our built-up future
Gained a bolder reality in the wonder of new friends,
The convulsive hate they manifested, the love
And thoughts they convened in new living-ways
To meet the revolving crisis of the years.

While my brother dreamed, memory of pain
Explored the aching stream of our relationship;
Our dispassionate arguments, our hurtings at times,
And, because we felt our imprisonment, our hates and fears....
So I waited and watched the cold sunset and evening star
Embrace in light and darkness the heart of America

Publication. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 60, no. 1 (April 1942), 14–15.

American History

“... this is what I say: I am suffering because
I am a radical, and indeed I am a radical;
I have suffered because I was an Italian, and indeed
I am an Italian. I have suffered more for my family
than for myself; but I am so convinced to be right
that you can only kill me once but if you could
execute me two other times, I would live again
to do what I have done already. I have finished.
Thank you....”

Vanzetti, the dreamy fish peddler,
hurt but not alone in the alien court-room,
voicing the sentiments of millions in his voice;
to scorning men voicing the voice of nations
in one stream of sentiments in his gentle voice,
that justice and tolerance might live for every one.

“... but remember always, Dante, in the play
of happiness, don’t use all for yourself only,
but down yourself just one step, at your side
and help the weak ones that cry for help: they are
your friends: they are the comrades that fight
for the conquest of the joy of freedom for all.
In this struggle of life you will find more love
and you will be loved....”

Sacco, the good shoemaker,
dreaming of the future with the poet that never was,
in spheres of tragic light, dreaming of the world
that never was, as each tragic moment passed
in streams of vivid light, to radiate a harmony
of thought and action that never came to pass.

Our agony is our triumph: Sacco and Vanzetti.

Publication. Poetry: *A Magazine of Verse* 60, no. 1 (April 1942), 15–16.

CHORUS FOR AMERICA

Bulosan's five-poem sequence from the 1942 Wagon & Star anthology

The Face of the War

I know a place where life is simplified
Like bread and butter and coffee.
I think of this place and America and the simplicity
That sometimes elevates your desires,
But sometimes I want to push the world
Toward the cliff of all eternity.

I want to follow a star of vision and write
Poems for the things we created together,
But they concealed our dream in a deep dark cave
Whose entrance is lost to history.

Rockets of war are falling from the sky
Like the fall of God long ago....

Still I think of this place and America and you
In the fatal rumor of wild artilleries,
And in the swift descent to the cavern
Where our dream lies waiting
In the stillness of death.

Publication. *Chorus for America: Six Philippine Poets* (Los Angeles: Wagon and Star, 1942), 35.

History of the Heart

It was not like what I thought at all.
Anger and arrogance conflicted. Pride remained
Disarmed till the aching heart cried aloud:
There is no race or region to life.
So I walked homeward through bourgeois homes,
Hearing the sharp cynical laughter storming
The clear and lucid pools of the brain.
I walked homeward to America, across the snow,
Fearing the heart would break with all the pride
Of the living and spill hate upon the snow—
Because there was nothing I could do.

Then I thought of running away from myself
Without some forgiving words of departure,
Without star witnesses, except America,
But the dawn found me with a new memory
And a clear conscience, whispering: *Time is change*.
I was not aware of time and my other self,
The very self that cried the other day;
But I ran to the other room, to my brother,
Saying: “Look, my heart is beating fast again!”
He paused momentarily at the fountain of sleep,
Crushing dreams of immaculate strivings,
Muttering: “What can you do about it?”

What could I do about it?
I will be simple. I rushed downstairs,
Opened the front door, and knelt on
The earth of America bright with snow.

Publication. *Chorus for America: Six Philippine Poets* (Los Angeles: Wagon and Star, 1942), 36.

Multitude and the Dance of Multitude

And suddenly I turned the other way to face
The sunlight showering the heart of America.
It was summer and the hour was like other hours:
A pinch of forever hurrying down the awakened heart,
The million dialectics of blood and bone and flesh.
Did you notice how I watched the men, glancing
At the hilltop where machine guns might have
Attacked the buildings, and the streets where trenches
Might have been dug or where tanks might have been mounted,
And the sky where bombers might have scoured
The defenseless nerve centers of America?
But you turned the other way to evade
The tide of scornful eyes that might have been
Snipers watching the street where we were waiting.
You wondered: *What is our crime?*
And turned to me. Then I saw the shadow
Of the country of my vision in your face,
Where the American dream might have crossed a thousand
Times to touch the mainspring of the awakened heart,
Whispering insistently that the time has come....

Publication. *Chorus for America: Six Philippine Poets* (Los Angeles: Wagon and Star, 1942), 37.

Many Voices

Europe is on the other side of the ocean,
Three thousand miles from America;
But telescoped through rushing voice of wires,
I see the dead bodies and the wrecked homes.
I hear the machine guns killing and leaping
Over boundaries of peace. I see
The sharp head of the bright bomb.
I feel the slow agony of the dead.

Let me look at America. Children laugh;
They play in the sun. They are happy.
Birds are in the air. Dogs run on lawns.
From somewhere a train whistles eastward,
Racing overland toward the edge of progress.
I face the window and take a long deep breath,
Feeling the clean air entering the empty lung.

All is well. My brother reads a new novel.
Van Gogh is a bright glow of red and yellow.
And Gorki, quiet on the wall, is a friend.
Here is a bunch of grapes—a burst of color—
That a late visitor set upon the table.
This is America today. But *tomorrow*—?
And on the desk are letters from relatives.

Let the suspiring heart beat for the carcasses
That lie rotting in the night-wastes of Europe.
The physical indifference of time is ruined.
Ruin is history. History is a crime.
Crime is the nightmare of peace.

Publication. *Chorus for America: Six Philippine Poets* (Los Angeles: Wagon and Star, 1942), 37–38.

Death and Transfiguration

This is the land. These are the people.
Trees are full under fine starlight.
Fields are bright with drooping wheat.
Heaven, heaven. Paradise in whose mountains
The heart leaps to higher desires: the return
To simple childhood and moonlight, the power
Of dreams and nightmares, the joys of sin....

This is the city. These are the buildings.
The long streets are empty tonight.
The lamps die with the death of midnight.
And the tenements are dark. Cold, cold.
I feel every moment that moves to blind
The heart with sadness, and slowly, softly
Turns the flaming mind into solid stone.
No man is free when life is a fragment
Of a dream whispered by a dying woman....

The hours move. Noiselessly the night
Escapes the terror of emptiness. Coldly
The poor cry in hunger under breaking snow.
From the window I move to reach the years
For the one moment in whose ageless chain
My wishes flame like full wheat under moonlight.
Soon the day will break and show our crimes.
And nothing can stop the million voices;
Not till this land and these people
Rise and conquer the loneliness together.

Publication. *Chorus for America: Six Philippine Poets* (Los Angeles: Wagon and Star, 1942), 39.

THE VOICE OF BATAAN

The complete 1943 wartime sequence

Prologue

Bataan has fallen.

With heads bloody but unbowed, we yielded to the enemy.

The world will long remember the epic struggle.

We have stood up uncomplaining.

Besieged on land and blockaded by sea,

We have done all that human endurance could bear.

What sustained us was a force more than merely physical.

It was the force of an unconquerable faith:

Something in the soul that is immortal!

It is the thought of native land.

All the world will testify.

Men fighting with an unshakable faith

Are made of something more than flesh;

But we are not made of impervious steel.

The flesh must yield at last,

Endurance melts away,

And the end of the battle must come.

Bataan has fallen,

But the spirit that made it stand

—A beacon to all the world—

Cannot fall....

Our defeat is our victory.*

Publication. *The Voice of Bataan* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1943), 3–4. The asterisk introduces Bulosan's note: "The Prologue is a metrical paraphrase of the farewell radio message from Corregidor delivered by Lt. Norman Reyes."

Bataan

I

Bataan! America's conscience,
Standing at the edge of the world's heart.
A small island of ashes and dead bodies,
Where the brave stood their ground, fighting,
Foodless until they were surrounded, cornered,
Fire on fire falling upon them from the sky;
And the enemy landed, conquered,
As though this island were the world.

Deadly planes scoured the skies,
Submarines nosed the seas—without help,
Without hope for help, they dug into the ground.
The forest rolled downward. All eyes skyward,
They saw the enemy cluster like stars,
Dropping flames numerous as clustering stars.
And they waited for words. But no words came.

II

Bataan! This was our last island,
Built in memory of old victories.
Every fighting man stood his ground,
Watching each other's lives, falling together,
And believing, in each other's care,
Peace for the world rested in their ground.

Not afraid to die, they hugged the tight holes
Until the enemy crept upon them
Who, holding their ground for a brief moment,
Gave the whole world another hope to hold.
As long as their hearts moved, the guns loaded,
And the fighting moved through the jungles
And on to the scarred beaches, until there
Were no more guns to load.

They fought to the last man for our island.
For the world's island, that the world's one world.
Fighting one enemy and one war,
Until there were no more hands to move.

For the hope we live by. For the future we live for.

III

Bataan! The world is but an island.

This the brave knew, creeping on the earth of home,
Holding strength with the other brave,
Those who printed kisses in American streets;
Not for the wound that opened and hurt,
Not for the flesh that burned, but for the hate
That blossomed in treetops and doorways:
The hate that crept from hate to tenderness.

They held the guns straight; plunged down the hill.
They did not stop to consider our promises.
They fought and fell, not for our promises,
Not for victory, but for the day
That would give the future, and kill the enemy.
For the indivisible day.
And toward the end: No Surrender.

IV

Bataan! Our fathers knew
The world is but an island, and all men
Fight one war, one enemy. Our age
Called it freedom: one and indivisible.

O America! Until our world's island is won,
Until our freedom is redeemed in freedom,
Until our dead are at peace with the living,
We the living will never rest, will never die with peace.

The war is a war for life.
The war belongs to all men.

V

Bataan in our heart's island!
We feel every fibre that moves to give wisdom
To the heart, vision to the eyes, seeing all
The brave rise under one star of liberty.
We face the future with one weapon,

All of us holding each other, men and women together,
For one hope, one island, one freedom.

The future is living and real,
Stirring in the conscience of America—
Another hope, another proof to the world,
That Bataan did not fall!

Publication. *The Voice of Bataan* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1943), 5–8.

Hospital: First Soldier

I

The hour of decision, world tearing world
In the uncontrollable stream of memory;
The deathless peace that ancestors carved in stone,
Forever changing, but now bleeding in Time's grips.
All the corpses that stared obscenely: shameless
In the background of our lives. Anonymous
Limbs that walked to God, proud and strong,
Clean and pure.... They pushed forward unafraid,
Tearing through death, here, where the guns uttered;
At first cold, then sharp and hot, then cold again.
"Will they come back to life? O, our brothers!"
The rugged foxholes scrubbed clean. Once stars
Shone upon brave faces, this was true.
And even toward the end no star failed.
We crouched in the earth until we hugged stone
To fire, ourselves afire with truth on our side.
For a brief moment we waited and hoped,
All eyes skyward, burning the sun, the night too:
All hearts stopped, the unutterable word
Smashing, killing the word "love!"

II

The earth sprang upward, spreading fanwise;
Whispering, the enemy escaped leaving another hour.
Still no word from the living. No word from the dying.

We passed through, tree after tree,
The whole world outside waiting;
Not for victory, not for love,
But for no retreat: our fate.

There was fear all night long.
There was bombing all day long. Time stood still.
Except our hearts pulsing, the forest breathed
With the silence of the seven seas.
Speechless, deathless, like the night,
Like first love moving a town, we wished

The bombs would cease falling from the sky.
Then suddenly the dawn came, and gave us hope.
“Another day. No retreat. Keep fighting.”

Outside the world was waiting.
Where the living held their anger with two hands,
Pushing through the heavy morning hours, seeing
Our men in utter pain,
And ruin.
While we bled,
The sky darkened, and it rained again....
Now this is all I remember.

Publication. *The Voice of Bataan* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1943), 11–12.

Prison: Second Soldier

“What is wrong?” “These men we trusted!”

And the answer: Surrender by torture.

By torture alone we were conquered.

Lying about us,

Our motives, our hopes (murder in their hands):

“These men by destiny brothers to us!”

“So we killed them to save them!”

“We swear by the sword we are God’s chosen people!”

“We despise civilization!” “Peace is a great lie!”

All through history we heard them speak.

First, about truth as a necessary evil and murder

As an absolute necessity; second, about civilization

As a great lie and culture as an impediment to progress.

A portentous lie! Why did we brave bullets

That leaped from everywhere? Why did we stop

To consider the grass? Kneel by our dead?...

Memory of home under blue sky, and familiar ground,

Sky blue and fertile; and children, children laughing.

They lied with a lie that echoed:

“What is wrong?” “Did we miss something?”

“Men arrest!” “Bear arms!” “Shoot!”

Military police drove the children and fired on them.

The women died, not surrendering.

And the men said: “We refuse to work!”

They were shot. There were no traitors.

For us, sorrow. We suffered

From the burning of houses. One man’s life

Is a story untold, a world

In itself. Make children,

Create civilization—Heroes are born,

Not deathless, but immortal.

Now in the cell I dream of those islands,

Hope of mankind....

Publication. *The Voice of Bataan* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1943), 13–14.

Japan: Third Soldier

All through the years, in that mythical land,
We followed the martial voices.
They burned the profound books of history;
The old and new books of science.
They made us believe the power of the sword;
The splendor and glory of conquest....
“Move eastward to the rising sun!” they shouted,
Pounding upon the horrid maps on the tables;
And our planes bombed and burned islands.
Is it splendor to destroy human lives?
Is it glory to ruin cities?

They told us:
“Move southward to the edge of the moon!”
“Move westward!” “Move northward!”
“We are the liberators of the barbaric east!”
“Soon we will dictate policies to the world!”
The whole world! Conquer! Dictate!
Their voices followed us everywhere,
But the banks superimposed our despair.
We hugged the world for comfort.

All guns pointed to our utter defeat.
The journey continued. Exiled from native land,
We thought of the little voices of home.
Time died in our country....
They told us we are the superior men....
Why am I dying in this unknown island?
Why do I remember my son running in the village?
(My son, you will take lessons from our defeat.
Run through the village, not with joy but bravery,
And rouse the villagers, our people,
So that all of you can march together
To the shining palaces of the martial men
And the silent, powerful lords,
Who must die to free the whole world....)

Ha! It was a mythical land.
We followed the martial voices.
Leaves fell upon our bodies.

The sun moved to the west.
There were no guns for our defense.
This is all true....
How painful it is to die for defeat.

Publication. *The Voice of Bataan* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1943), 15–16.

Song: Interlude

My dear, when you come back,
look for me in the familiar day.

Look under the sound of the wind,
and in the vast tracks of the sky.

When you come back, look for me
in the passing of warring years.

My dear, look for me only
in the grand havoc of your fears.

And if you come back to me
just to live through another day,

My dear, live only for me;
if you come back to me.

The world divides in my heart,
and the future is a knife in my hand.

My dear, the pain drives me to fear,
and makes all thoughts obsolete.

The fear upon my side is the pain
that burns all my hopes.

It's the hand that touches the future,
and you, my dear, my dear.

Publication. *The Voice of Bataan* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1943), 17–18.

Escape: Fourth Soldier

I

Toward the end: the open sea.
We jammed the boat. Journey and exile.
Then Manila, the burning city; Corregidor, surrender.
The enemy: treachery.

Drifting, disaster.
But we drifted away; Australia, safe.
Free and refugee: we heard the fatal news.
Then the planes came southward; the attack came.
Exile now. We remembered the attack in the groves,
The fierce tribesmen leading;
Then forming solid ranks, attacking—
Filipinos! Americanos!
And after a while, the world stood still,
Thought, then understood: victory.
But for a brief moment only.

We saw the ocean spread sunward.
Only anger now; farewell.
Goodbye into home, but forever.

Home from the war. Magellan to Columbus,
Explorers and discoverers, and Filipinas lost behind.
Westward, through captured islands,
Nosing danger, then America: our home.

II

Newsflash: Escape!
The captain said: "Escape where?"
We looked. No words came.
In the street, in the restaurant: "Is there war?"
Answering, "Tell us what to do!"

Home and exile. These people,
Our friends, our families:
Whenever the planes roared, exile began.
Walking in the morning, war began.
Reading books, the facts of war,
War began.

“We will come back!”

III

The war made our island: Bataan.
The last stand, beginning of victory.
On the other side: Stalingrad, Lidice.
The heart of humanity.

The war made our island: Bataan.
Bataan! Bataan! The last island of freedom.
The star of all our living pride.
Bataan! A world! Immortality!

IV

And the war; exile, refugee.
We remember all; Barcelona, Manila.
We know. We will not forget.
Bataan. Freedom.

Publication. *The Voice of Bataan* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1943), 19–21.

America: Fifth Soldier

Though desolate their graves stand, praise them.
The winds of hope cry out their names; the heroes
Who, fighting lived their lives over again; dying,
They became immortal among the dead.

You are heroes, too. Consider him from the new
Understanding. Angry, unrepulsed, the brown soldier
Was there, dragging the field gun into position
Until the enemy, savage, cruel, advanced
Through collapsible forests, the trees bending
Against the wind.... But he withstood it.
In the night the message came: "He is dead!"

Our first hero. He was a peaceful peasant.
His children cried when he left, passing
Through Pangasinan, Pampanga, Bulacan;
Then circling round toward Bataan, he sat
At the edge of a wide plantation and thought
Of his full wife, who wept in the night.
He said: "War is indivisible."
He won greatness in death.

Now I tell you
I saw it. Our flag cracked and fell.
I saw him running through gunfire;
Jumping over ditches, disappearing; then it
Was there—our flag still flying in the air!
Then he fell, and the earth convulsed.
We rushed; but he was dying.
"Peace is indivisible," he said.
The day was won....

How little was said, but so much done.
All my life I have lived with workers, and he was one.
I served their cause, because it was my cause.
So much have I done, but so little understand.

Make way for our heroes. Build upon their graves
The foundations of a new world. Every grass
That grows untrampled is a flag of freedom.

Publication. *The Voice of Bataan* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1943), 22–23.

Philippines: Sixth Soldier

And you who live in other lands,
Touched by the murderous hands that wrecked
Our homes and lives, take heed of the lessons
We have written for humanity with our very blood.
This is the hour to take the sword and the gun.
Our enemies will try to stamp us out one by one;
Not only our lives they will crush,
But also the songs we have created in centuries
Of hoping and planning, passed through generations,
Until one day it became the songs of all our lives.

They will destroy our words; the moving spirit
Behind our written words. They will falsify
Our human tenderness and grace;
All that remains of our tenderness and grace.

It is a war for our right to walk erect;
And, walking with perfect bodies,
Our minds are clean and straight,
And pure and forever young. It is a war
Of the body and the mind. It is a war
To end suspicion and fear, decay and lies.
It is a war for all of us; for our right
To dream and hope, to live freely among men
Down the years, living and thinking and saying
Aloud what is in our innermost minds....

We have lived in a portion of the earth
Where the words were all true, and lies were unheard;
And in that corner of the world, trees
Were a part of our lives, and the songs of birds
Were music in our daily toil.
And at nights, all through the years,
We sat with the older people by candlelight
And argued and asked questions,
And the arguments were not distorted,
And the answers were all true and full of wisdom.
In that land the books spoke of our lives:
All the words were written for the glory of our lives.

No child was born to believe the lies.
No man grew up to doubt the truth.
This was our country: the land of humanity.

Can they break down the spirit of our people
With their terrible guns and ships of fear?
Can they blot out our history? Erase the names
Of our great men?

No. They cannot
Conquer. As long as one man lives,
Although he is driven into desperation and insanity,
He will feel his way out of the total darkness,
He will creep through the narrow tunnels of the world,
He will sit upon the cold portals of life,
He will ask himself and he will remember,
He will remember, he will remember.
He will remember the lessons of our history.
He will remember the words of our great men.
He will remember the words of freedom
That move silently from the spirit of dead men,
Traveling in a thousand secret ways from man to man,
In sign or in books, in music or in stone—
Enriching the mind, making it bold.

As long as one man lives,
He will remember the words of freedom.

O you who live in other lands, listen to us!
We sign this document with our blood.
We bequeath it to all mankind.
We fought the terror that came into our country.
The voices of dead men are immortal in our voices.
The strength of beaten men is deathless in our strength.

The hope of gagged men; the light of blinded men:
All with us!

We will rise again
With strong voices. The song of freedom
Will move in our hearts again. We will walk
On the earth with all the hope of dead men.

We will leap through the world like flame,

Cleansing this foul and rotten world,
Where fear and want corrode the minds of men,
Where novel thought and prayer are sins,
Where the soul is corrupted with a thousand lies.

To every one living:
Look into the eyes of your children.
Watch the exile walking in your streets.
We all know the bright word “freedom,”
From the first man who died for it
To the last man who despised it.

All of us today—we are one race of men—
All of us who fight for freedom
With a prayer or a song,
A gun or a written word:
Every one of us,
All of us,
Today!

Publication. *The Voice of Bataan* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1943), 24–27.

Unknown Soldier

For you, my son,
this message is born out of the night,
out of the bitter struggle for a better life,
so that you will reach the tender light of day:

For you, my son,
whom in the spring the flowers will teach
to grow with the changing seasons,
will play with the running wind
and the greening grass;
for you the spring earth will blossom
into a new world,
where new seeds
and new fruits
will nourish you into maturity.

I die for a brighter future.
But I am ashamed to leave you
an untidy, uncomfortable world,
my son....

Publication. *The Voice of Bataan* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1943), 28.

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United States Federal Bureau of Investigation. Partial Carlos Bulosan file. Copy preserved by University of Washington Libraries.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Open institutional sources and primary digital witnesses

University of Washington digital exhibit

An illustrated, institutionally curated biography organized around migration, labor, wartime publication, surveillance, Local 37, and Bulosan's Seattle years.

University of Washington exhibit bibliography

Primary and secondary sources used for the university's Bulosan exhibit.

*HathiTrust record for *The Voice of Bataan**

Public-domain catalogue record and complete scan used as this edition's base witness.

*Library of Congress: *Bulosan and Filipino Migration**

Report on the 2006 Library of Congress symposium and the continuing recovery of Bulosan's work.

Academy of American Poets profile

A concise reference biography and selection of later-facing links; its birth date reflects one side of the disputed record.

HistoryLink biography

A Seattle-centered account with attention to migration, wartime fame, and his final years.

Poetry Foundation archive

Entry point for the original *Poetry* issue pages and scans from 1936–42.

TEXTUAL AND RIGHTS NOTE

What was reset, what remains unrecovered, and how status was checked

The *Poetry* texts were transcribed from the original issue-page images at the Poetry Foundation/JSTOR archive. Printed page numbers are 263–67 (February 1936), 326–29 (September 1937), 259 (August 1938), and 12–16 (April 1942). The first two groups credit “Carl Bulosan”; the 1938 and 1942 appearances use “Carlos Bulosan.” Group headings and Dorothy Babb’s dedication are retained in the section apparatus.

The *Chorus for America* texts were checked against the project scan of the Wagon & Star first edition, pages 35–39. *The Voice of Bataan* was checked line by line against the HathiTrust page images, pages 3–28. Wrapping forced by those books’ narrow measures—including divided words and short hanging continuations—was regularized without changing intentional line breaks. The Prologue footnote is carried into its publication note.

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COLOPHON

Production record

This edition of *Collected Poems* by Carlos Bulosan was edited by Brian Kim Stefans and produced in Los Angeles in 2026 for *Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry*.

The page is six by nine inches. All interior pages use the series cream stock color. The text is set in EB Garamond, with mirrored margins, live typography, linked contents, PDF bookmarks, and publication apparatus following every work.

The cover uses clean source artwork preserved in the project's complete cover archive. All source scans, downloaded page images, research documents, renewal tables, transcription files, production code, and visual quality checks are retained in the poet folder.

HISTORICAL FRONT MATTER

Carlos Bulosan - Collected Poems

Dedication to Aurelio Bulosan

Prefatory Note

Restored from the original source scans

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TO AURELIO BULOSAN

I wanted to do something for you, but the years came and went and left a scar in our lives. Then the war came, and our country was taken. There was no more time left for me to make you live in my words again.

I sat down and recorded the beautiful love you showed me, and the wonderful dignity that followed you everywhere, so that all the world will know that somehow there is decency among us. Here it is at last, though it is not the thing I wanted to write for you. It is enough that your brother wrote it—the little sick brother you taught to read by lamplight, because you knew that it is a crime to live in ignorance. Yes, it is enough that I wrote it for you who taught me that it is a great crime to live in misery in a land of abundance.

Maybe you will not come through this war. Maybe I will not live through it. But it is enough that we are living at a time when the cruel forces that scarred our lives are being bared for all humanity to see. I know that if you had two lives you would live again and do what you had already done for me in America.

PREFATORY NOTE

The cultural life of the Philippines, like its political history, is turbulent but potent with unlimited possibilities. The best writers and artists were inevitably the most ardent fighters and revolutionists. A great tradition was started in Spanish times by Filipinos who sacrificed their lives and fortunes for the destruction of tyranny in their country. It is this tradition which has become the foundation of Philippine culture.

We are presenting a manifestation of the cultural heritage of the Filipino people in the form of a long poem, *The Voice of Bataan*. It is difficult to evaluate its artistic and literary qualities, but it is easy to understand its powerful conviction in a philosophy of life worth fighting for in the world. Perhaps for the first time you have the opportunity to know why the Filipino writer is indomitably a revolutionary.

The war is not only a war of battleships and planes, of tanks and soldiers, but it is also a war of men's minds for the islands they have created within them-

selves. It is a war of faiths. But it cannot be won without investigating all our ideals and traditions, without purging ourselves of the insincerities and banalities which have corrupted the machinery of our intellect. The ideas which motivated the war are so explosive and vast in their implications that it is impossible to do away with one wrong without doing away with all wrongs.

Unless our motives in this war are clearly defined, unless we recognize the inner compulsions of our lives, there can be no war worth fighting, no ideal worth living. There can be a lost war only—a war to disintegrate men's minds into dark confusion and barbarism. The dynamic struggle between the new beliefs and the old beliefs beats significantly upon our lives. It beats upon those who are trying to free human values from distortion and suppression; it beats upon the soldier and our conscience with all its force. It is the war of faiths, and the war of ideas; of the intellect which gave birth to the immortal courage of Bataan.

But it is our faith in the future, our common faith in life, which actually binds us together in one positive action. Those who would try to distort our purpose might warn us that civilization is a great lie. But we also give warning to them that truth can never die.

It is the indestructibility of truth which has given life to all our beliefs, which has reinvigorated our common ideals. The war will be fought on many battlefronts; in the continents that men established within themselves as well as on the islands where they live as a testament of human courage.

The old world is dying, but a new world is being born, generating life from the chaos that beats upon us all. The false grandeur and security, the unfulfilled promises and illusory power, the faith of the dead and those who are about to die, will challenge the force of our courage and honesty with equal force and terror. The old world is dying, dying, so that the new world will be born with less sacrifice and agony on the living.

In coming out with this poem as our first publication since the incorporation of the American-Philippine Foundation, it is not our purpose to honor the heroes of Bataan with words. In that promontory of freedom, Americans and Filipinos fought for each other side by side and back to back with no distinction of color or creed, but with heroism, sacrifice and devotion so great that no word can pay homage to their deed.

The heroes of Bataan have cheated Death, and their finest example of bravery and sacrifice has become

poetry. And out of this world now a-borning, which their deed has made their own sepulchre, will be heard over and over and forever more, audible whispers that travel with the wind.

Listen! It's the voice of Bataan!

E. LLAMAS ROSARIO,
Secretary and Director of Research,
American-Philippine Foundation, Inc.