
POEMS OF
NAZIM
HIKMET

Revised and Expanded

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REGARDING ART

Sometimes I, too, tell the ah's
of my heart one by one
like the blood-red beads
of a ruby rosary strung
 on strands of golden hair!

But my
poetry's muse
takes to the air
on wings made of steel
like the I-beams
 of my suspension bridges!

I don't pretend
 the nightingale's lament
to the rose isn't easy on the ears . . .
But the language
 that really speaks to me
are Beethoven sonatas played
on copper, iron, wood, bone, and catgut . . .

You can *have*
galloping off
in a cloud of dust!
Me, I wouldn't trade
for the purest-bred
 Arabian steed
the sixty mph
 of my iron horse
 running on iron tracks!

Sometimes my eye is caught like a big dumb fly
by the masterly spider webs in the corners of my room.
But I really look up

to the seventy-seven-story, reinforced-concrete mountains
my blue-shirted builders create!

Were I to meet
the male beauty
“young Adonis, god of Byblos,”
on a bridge, I’d probably never notice;
but I can’t help staring into my philosopher’s glassy eyes
or my fireman’s square face
red as a sweating sun!

Though I can smoke
third-class cigarettes filled
on my electric workbenches,
I can’t roll tobacco—even the finest—
in paper by hand and smoke it!
I didn’t—
wouldn’t—trade
my wife dressed in her leather cap and jacket
for Eve’s nakedness!
Maybe I don’t have a “poetic soul”?
What can I do
when I love my own children
more
than Mother Nature’s!

ON SHIRTS, PANTS, CLOTH CAPS, AND FELT HATS

If there are those
who'd call

me

“an enemy

of a clean shirt,”

they should see a picture of my great teacher.

The master of masters, Marx, pawned

his jacket,

and he ate maybe one meal every four days;

yet

his awesome beard

cascaded

down a spotless

snow-white

starched shirt . . .

And since when did pressed pants get the death sentence?

Wise guys

should read our history here, too:

“In 1848, as bullets parted his hair,

he'd wear

pants of genuine English wool

in true English style,

creased and waxed

à l'anglaise—

the greatest of men, Engels . . .

When Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov Lenin stood

like a fire-breathing giant on the barricades,

he wore a collar

and a tie as well . . . ”

As for me

who's just another proletarian poet

—Marxist-Leninist consciousness,

thirty kilos of bones,

a couple kilometers
of blood vessels,
muscles, flesh, skin, and nerves—
the cloth cap on my head
doesn't tell
what's in it
any more than my only felt hat
makes me a tool
of the past that's passing . . .

But
if I wear a cloth cap
six days a week,
it's so that once a week
when I'm out with my girl
I can wear
clean
my only felt hat . . .

Except
why don't I have *two* felt hats?
What do you say, master?
Am I lazy?
No!
To bind pages
twelve hours a day,
to stand on my feet
till I drop,
is hard work . . .

Am I totally stupid?
No!
For instance,
I could hardly be
as backward
as Mr. So-and-So . . .

Am I a fool?
Well,

completely . . .
Maybe a bit careless . . .
But all the time
 the real reason is that
 I'm a proletarian,
 brother,
 a proletarian!
And I'll own two felt hats
 —two *million*—
only when,
like every
 proletarian,
I own—*we* own—
 the textile mills
 of Barcelona-Habik-Mosan-Manchester!
And if n-o-o-o-o-o-t,
NOT!

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