

Classic Poetry Series

**Nazim Hikmet**  
**- poems -**

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# Nazim Hikmet(1902-1963)

Nâzım Hikmet Ran (15 January 1902 – 3 June 1963), commonly known as Nâzım Hikmet (Turkish pronunciation: [naˈzɪm hicˈmet] ( listen)) was a Turkish poet, playwright, novelist, screenwriter, director and memoirist. He was acclaimed for the "lyrical flow of his statements". Described as a "romantic communist" and "romantic revolutionary", he was repeatedly arrested for his political beliefs and spent much of his adult life in prison or in exile. His poetry has been translated into more than fifty languages.

According to Nâzım Hikmet, he was of paternal Turkish and maternal German, Polish, Georgian, Circassian and French descent. Nâzım Hikmet's mother came from a distinguished, cosmopolitan family with predominantly Circassian (Adyghe) roots, along with high social position and relations to Polish nobility. From his father's side, he had Turkish heritage. His father, Hikmet Bey, was the son of Çerkes Nâzım Pasha, after whom Nâzım Hikmet was named. His mother, Ayşe Celile Hanım, was of 3/8 Circassian, 2/8 Polish, 1/8 Serbian, 1/8 German, 1/8 French (Huguenot) ancestry. Nazım's maternal grandfather, Hasan Enver Pasha, was the son of Polish Mustafa Celalettin Pasha and Saffet Hanım who was born to Serbian Omar Pasha and Circassian Advıye Hanım (daughter of Çerkes Hafız Pasha). Mustafa Celalettin Pasha (born Konstanty Borzecki herbu Pólkożic) authored "Les Turcs anciens et modernes" in Constantinople (present-day Istanbul), in 1869. This is considered one of the first works of national Turkist political thought. Nâzım Hikmet's maternal grandmother, Leyla Hanım, was the daughter of Mehmet Ali Pasha, of French (Huguenot) and German origin, and Circassian Ayşe Sıdıka Hanım who was also a daughter of Çerkes Hafız uncle, Enver Celalettin Pasha, was a member of the Ottoman Army General Staff. Nâzım Hikmet and Celile Hanım's cousins include Oktay Rifat Horozcu, a leading Turkish poet, and the statesman Ali Fuat Cebesoy, among others.

# A Sad State Of Freedom

You waste the attention of your eyes,  
the glittering labour of your hands,  
and knead the dough enough for dozens of loaves  
of which you'll taste not a morsel;  
you are free to slave for others--  
you are free to make the rich richer.

The moment you're born  
they plant around you  
mills that grind lies  
lies to last you a lifetime.  
You keep thinking in your great freedom  
a finger on your temple  
free to have a free conscience.

Your head bent as if half-cut from the nape,  
your arms long, hanging,  
your saunter about in your great freedom:  
you're free  
with the freedom of being unemployed.

You love your country  
as the nearest, most precious thing to you.  
But one day, for example,  
they may endorse it over to America,  
and you, too, with your great freedom--  
you have the freedom to become an air-base.

You may proclaim that one must live  
not as a tool, a number or a link  
but as a human being--  
then at once they handcuff your wrists.  
You are free to be arrested, imprisoned  
and even hanged.

There's neither an iron, wooden  
nor a tulle curtain  
in your life;  
there's no need to choose freedom:

you are free.  
But this kind of freedom  
is a sad affair under the stars.

Translated by Taner Baybars

Nazim Hikmet

# A Spring Piece Left In The Middle

Taut, thick fingers punch  
the teeth of my typewriter.  
Three words are down on paper  
in capitals:

SPRING

SPRING

SPRING...

And me -- poet, proofreader,  
the man who's forced to read  
two thousand bad lines  
every day  
for two liras--

why,

since spring

has come, am I

still sitting here

like a ragged

black chair?

My head puts on its cap by itself,  
I fly out of the printer's,  
I'm on the street.

The lead dirt of the composing room  
on my face,  
seventy-five cents in my pocket.

SPRING IN THE AIR...

In the barbershops  
they're powdering  
the sallow cheeks  
of the pariah of Publishers Row.

And in the store windows  
three-color bookcovers  
flash like sunstruck mirrors.

But me,

I don't have even a book of ABC's  
that lives on this street  
and carries my name on its door!

But what the hell...

I don't look back,

the lead dirt of the composing room  
on my face,  
seventy-five cents in my pocket,  
SPRING IN THE AIR...

\*

The piece got left in the middle.  
It rained and swamped the lines.  
But oh! what I would have written...  
The starving writer sitting on his three-thousand-page  
three-volume manuscript  
wouldn't stare at the window of the kebab joint  
but with his shining eyes would take  
the Armenian bookseller's dark plump daughter by storm...  
The sea would start smelling sweet.  
Spring would rear up  
like a sweating red mare  
and, leaping onto its bare back,  
I'd ride it  
into the water.

Then  
my typewriter would follow me  
every step of the way.  
I'd say:  
"Oh, don't do it!  
Leave me alone for an hour..."  
then  
my head-my hair falling out--  
would shout into the distance:  
"I AM IN LOVE..."

\*

I'm twenty-seven,  
she's seventeen.  
"Blind Cupid,  
lame Cupid,  
both blind and lame Cupid  
said, Love this girl,"  
I was going to write;  
I couldn't say it

but still can!

But if

it rained,

if the lines I wrote got swamped,

if I have twenty-five cents left in my pocket,

what the hell...

Hey, spring is here spring is here spring

spring is here!

My blood is budding inside me!

20 and 21 April 1929

Trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (1993)

Nazim Hikmet

# About My Poetry

I have no silver-saddled horse to ride,  
no inheritance to live on,  
neither riches no real-estate --  
a pot of honey is all I own.  
A pot of honey  
    red as fire!

My honey is my everything.  
I guard  
my riches and my real-estate  
-- my honey pot, I mean --  
from pests of every species,  
Brother, just wait...  
As long as I've got  
honey in my pot,  
bees will come to it  
    from Timbuktu...

Trans. by Mutlu Konuk and Randy Blasing (1993)

Nazim Hikmet



# After Release From Prison

Awake.

Where are you?

At home.

Still unaccustomed-  
awake or sleeping-  
to being in your own home.

This is just one more of the stupefactions  
of spending thirteen years in a prison.

Who's lying at your side?

Not loneliness, but your wife,  
in the peaceful sleep of an angel.

Pregnancy looks good on a woman.

What time is it?

Eight.

That means you're safe until evening.

Because it's the practice of police

Never to raid homes in broad daylight.

Nazim Hikmet

# Angina Pectoris

If half my heart is here, doctor,  
the other half is in China  
with the army flowing  
toward the Yellow River.

And, every morning, doctor,  
every morning at sunrise my heart  
is shot in Greece.

And every night, doctor,  
when the prisoners are asleep and the infirmary is deserted,  
my heart stops at a run-down old house  
in Istanbul.

And then after ten years  
all i have to offer my poor people  
is this apple in my hand, doctor,  
one red apple:  
my heart.

And that, doctor, that is the reason  
for this angina pectoris--  
not nicotine, prison, or arteriosclerosis.  
I look at the night through the bars,  
and despite the weight on my chest  
my heart still beats with the most distant stars.

Trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (1993)

Nazim Hikmet

# Autobiography

I was born in 1902  
I never once went back to my birthplace  
I don't like to turn back  
at three I served as a pasha's grandson in Aleppo  
at nineteen as a student at Moscow Communist University  
at forty-nine I was back in Moscow as the Tcheka Party's guest  
and I've been a poet since I was fourteen  
some people know all about plants some about fish  
                                  I know separation  
some people know the names of the stars by heart  
                                  I recite absences  
I've slept in prisons and in grand hotels  
I've known hunger even a hunger strike and there's almost no food  
  I haven't tasted  
at thirty they wanted to hang me  
at forty-eight to give me the Peace Prize  
                                  which they did  
at thirty-six I covered four square meters of concrete in half a year  
at fifty-nine I flew from Prague to Havana in eighteen hours  
I never saw Lenin I stood watch at his coffin in '24  
in '61 the tomb I visit is his books  
they tried to tear me away from my party  
                                  it didn't work  
nor was I crushed under the falling idols  
in '51 I sailed with a young friend into the teeth of death  
in '52 I spent four months flat on my back with a broken heart  
  waiting to die  
I was jealous of the women I loved  
I didn't envy Charlie Chaplin one bit  
I deceived my women  
I never talked my friends' backs  
I drank but not every day  
I earned my bread money honestly what happiness  
out of embarrassment for others I lied  
I lied so as not to hurt someone else  
                                  but I also lied for no reason at all  
I've ridden in trains planes and cars  
most people don't get the chance  
I went to opera

most people haven't even heard of the opera  
and since '21 I haven't gone to the places most people visit  
mosques churches temples synagogues sorcerers  
but I've had my coffee grounds read  
my writings are published in thirty or forty languages  
in my Turkey in my Turkish they're banned  
cancer hasn't caught up with me yet  
and nothing says it will  
I'll never be a prime minister or anything like that  
and I wouldn't want such a life  
nor did I go to war  
or burrow in bomb shelters in the bottom of the night  
and I never had to take to the road under diving planes  
but I fell in love at almost sixty  
in short comrades  
even if today in Berlin I'm croaking of grief  
I can say I've lived like a human being  
and who knows  
how much longer I'll live  
what else will happen to me

This autobiography was written  
in east Berlin on 11 September 1961

Trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (1993)

Nazim Hikmet

# Don Quixote

The knight of immortal youth  
at the age of fifty found his mind in his heart  
and on July morning went out to capture  
the right, the beautiful, the just.

Facing him a world of silly and arrogant giants,  
he on his sad but brave Rocinante.  
I know what it means to be longing for something,  
but if your heart weighs only a pound and sixteen ounces,  
there's no sense, my Don, in fighting these senseless windmills.

But you are right, of course, Dulcinea is your woman,  
the most beautiful in the world;  
I'm sure you'll shout this fact  
at the face of street-traders;  
but they'll pull you down from your horse  
and beat you up.  
But you, the unbeatable knight of our curse,  
will continue to glow behind the heavy iron visor  
and Dulcinea will become even more beautiful.

Translated by Taner Baybars

Nazim Hikmet

## Five Lines

To overcome lies in the heart, in the streets, in the books  
from the lullabies of the mothers  
to the news report that the speaker reads,  
understanding, my love, what a great joy it is,  
to understand what is gone and what is on the way.

Nazim Hikmet

# Gioconda And Si-Ya-U

to the memory of my friend SI-YA-U,  
whose head was cut off in Shanghai

## A CLAIM

Renowned Leonardo's  
world-famous  
"La Gioconda"  
has disappeared.  
And in the space  
vacated by the fugitive  
a copy has been placed.

The poet inscribing  
the present treatise  
knows more than a little  
about the fate  
of the real Gioconda.  
She fell in love  
with a seductive  
graceful youth:  
a honey-tongued  
almond-eyed Chinese  
named SI-YA-U.  
Gioconda ran off  
after her lover;  
Gioconda was burned  
in a Chinese city.

I, Nazim Hikmet,  
authority  
on this matter,  
thumbing my nose at friend and foe  
five times a day,  
undaunted,  
claim  
I can prove it;  
if I can't,  
I'll be ruined and banished

forever from the realm of poesy.

1928

Part One

Excerpts from Gioconda's Diary

15 March 1924: Paris, Louvre Museum

At last I am bored with the Louvre Museum.

You can get fed up with boredom very fast.

I am fed up with my boredom.

And from the devastation inside me

I drew this lesson;

to visit

a museum is fine,

to be a museum piece is terrible!

In this palace that imprisons the past

I am placed under such a heavy sentence

that as the paint on my face cracks out of boredom

I'm forced to keep grinning without letting up.

Because

I am the Gioconda from Florence

whose smile is more famous than Florence.

I am bored with the Louvre Museum.

And since you get sick soon enough

of conversing with the past,

I decided

from now on

to keep a diary.

Writing of today may be of some help

in forgetting yesterday...

However, the Louvre is a strange place.

Here you might find

Alexander the Great's

Longines watch complete with chronometer,

but

not a single sheet of clean notebook paper

or a pencil worth a piaster.



Damn your Louvre, your Paris.  
I'll write these entries  
    on the back of my canvas.

And so  
when I picked a pen from the pocket  
of a nearsighted American  
    sticking his red nose into my skirts  
--his hair stinking of wine--

I started my memoirs.

I'm writing on my back  
    the sorrow of having a famous smile...

18 March: Night

The Louvre has fallen asleep.  
In the dark, the armless Venus  
    looks like a veteran of the Great War.  
The gold helmet of a knight gleams  
as the light from the night watchman's lantern  
    strikes a dark picture.

Here  
    in the Louvre  
        my days are all the same  
            like the six sides of a wood cube.  
My head is full of sharp smells  
    like the shelf of a medicine cabinet.

20 March

I admire those Flemish painters:  
is it easy to give the air of a naked goddess  
    to the plump ladies  
of milk and sausage merchants?  
But  
    even if you wear silk panties,  
cow + silk panties = cow.

Last night  
    a window  
        was left open.  
The naked Flemish goddesses caught cold.  
All day  
today,  
    turning their bare  
mountain-like pink behinds to the public,  
        they coughed and sneezed...  
I caught cold, too.  
So as not to look silly smiling with a cold,  
I tried to hide my sniffles  
        from the visitors.

1 April

Today I saw a Chinese:  
    he was nothing like those Chinese with their topknots.  
How long  
    he gazed at me!  
I'm well aware  
    the favor of Chinese  
        who work ivory like silk  
        is not to be taken lightly...

11 April

I caught the name of the Chinese who comes every day:  
        SI-YA-U.

16 April

Today we spoke  
in the language of eyes.  
He works as a weaver days  
and studies nights.  
Now it's a long time since the night  
came on like a pack of black-shirted Fascists.

The cry of a man out of work  
who jumped into the Seine  
rose from the dark water.  
And ah! you on whose fist-size head  
          mountain-like winds descend,  
at this very minute you're probably busy  
building towers of thick, leather-bound books  
to get answers to the questions you asked of the stars.

READ

SI-YA-U

    READ...

And when your eyes find in the lines what they desire,  
                                when your eyes tire,  
rest your tired head

    like a black-and-yellow Japanese chrysanthemum  
                                on the books..

    SLEEP

          SI-YA-U

                  SLEEP...

18 April

I've begun to forget  
the names of those Renaissance masters.

I want to see

    the black bird-and-flower

                                watercolors  
    that slant-eyed Chinese painters

                                drip  
    from their long thin bamboo brushes.

NEWS FROM THE PARIS WIRELESS

    HALLO

        HALLO

          HALLO

    PARIS

PARIS  
PARIS...

Voices race through the air  
like the fiery greyhounds.  
The wireless in the Eiffel Tower calls out:

HALLO  
HALLO  
HALLO

PARIS  
PARIS  
PARIS...

"I, TOO, am Oriental -- this voice is for me.  
My ears are receivers, too.  
I, too, must listen to Eiffel."

News from China

News from China

News from China:

The dragon that came down from the Kaf mountains  
has spread his wings  
across the golden skies of the Chinese homeland.

But

in this business it's not only the British lord's  
gullet shaved

like the thick neck  
of a plucked hen

that will be cut

but also

the long  
thin

beard of Confucius!

FROM GIOCONDA'S DIARY

21 April

Today my Chinese  
looked my straight

in the eye

and asked:

"Those who crush our rice fields  
with the caterpillar treads of their tanks  
and who swagger through our cities  
like emperors of hell,  
are they of YOUR race,  
the race of him who CREATED you?"  
I almost raised my hand  
and cried "No!"

27 April

Tonight at the blare of an American trumpet  
--the horn of a 12-horsepower Ford--  
I awoke from a dream,  
and what I glimpsed for an instant  
instantly vanished.  
What I'd seen was a still blue lake.  
In this lake the slant-eyed light of my life  
had wrapped his fingers around the neck of a gilded fish.  
I tried to reach him,  
my boat a Chinese teacup  
and my sail  
the embroidered silk  
of a Japanese  
bamboo umbrella...

NEWS FROM THE PARIS WIRELESS

HALLO  
HALLO  
HALLO

PARIS  
PARIS  
PARIS

The radio station signs off.

Once more  
    blue-shirted Parisians  
        fill Paris with red voices  
            and red colors...

FROM GIOCONDA'S DIARY

2 May

Today my Chinese failed to show up.

5 May

Still no sign of him...

8 May

My days  
    are like the waiting room  
                        of a station:  
eyes glued  
    to the tracks...

10 May

Sculptors of Greece,  
painters of Seljuk china,  
weavers of fiery rugs in Persia,  
chanters of hymns to dromedaries in deserts,  
dancer whose body undulates like a breeze,  
craftsman who cuts thirty-six facets from a one-carat stone,  
and YOU

    who have five talents on your five fingers,  
        master MICHELANGELO!

Call out and announce to both friends and foe:  
because he made too much noise in Paris,  
because he smashed in the window

of the Mandarin ambassador,  
Gioconda's lover  
has been thrown out  
of France...

My lover from China has gone back to China...  
And now I'd like to know  
who's Romeo and Juliet!  
If he isn't Juliet in pants  
and I'm not Romeo in skirts...  
Ah, if I could cry--  
if only I could cry...

12 May

Today  
when I caught a glimpse of myself  
in the mirror of some mother's daughter  
touching up the paint  
on her bloody mouth  
in front of me,  
the tin crown of my fame shattered on my head.  
While the desire to cry writhes inside me  
I smile demurely;  
like a stuffed pig's head  
my ugly face grins on...  
Leonardo da Vinci,  
may your bones  
become the brush of a Cubist painter  
for grabbing me by the throat -- your hands dripping with paint --  
and sticking in my mouth like a gold-plated tooth  
this cursed smile...

Part Two  
The Flight

FROM THE AUTHOR'S NOTEBOOK

Ah, friends, Gioconda is in a bad way...  
Take it from me,  
    if she didn't have hopes  
        of getting word from afar,  
she'd steal a guard's pistol,  
    and aiming to give the color of death  
to her lips' cursed smile,  
    she'd empty it into her canvas breast...

#### FROM GIOCONDA'S DIARY

O that Leonardo da Vinci's brush  
had conceived me  
    under the gilded sun of China!  
That the painted mountain behind me  
had been a sugar-loaf Chinese mountain,  
that the pink-white color of my long face  
    could fade,  
that my eyes were almond-shaped!  
And if only my smile  
    could show what I feel in my heart!  
Then in the arms of him who is far away  
    I could have roamed through China...

#### FROM THE AUTHOR'S NOTEBOOK

I had a heart-to-heart talk with Gioconda today.  
The hours flew by  
    one after another  
like the pages of a spell-binding book.  
And the decision we reached  
will cut like a knife  
    Gioconda's life  
        in two.  
Tomorrow night you'll see us carry it out...

#### FROM THE AUTHOR'S NOTEBOOK



The clock of Notre Dame  
strikes midnight.

Midnight  
midnight.

Who knows at this very moment  
which drunk is killing his wife?

Who know at this very moment  
which ghost  
is haunting the halls  
of a castle?

Who knows at this very moment  
which thief  
is surmounting  
the most unsurmountable wall?

Midnight... Midnight...  
Who knows at this very moment...  
I know very well that in every novel  
this is the darkest hour.

Midnight  
strikes fear into the heart of every reader...  
But what could I do?  
When my monoplane landed  
on the roof of the Louvre,  
the clock of Notre Dame  
struck midnight.  
And, strangely enough, I wasn't afraid  
as I patted the aluminum rump of my plane  
and stepped down on the roof...  
Uncoiling the fifty-fathom-long rope wound around my waist,  
I lowered it outside Gioconda's window  
like a vertical bridge between heaven and hell.  
I blew my shrill whistle three times.  
And I got an immediate response  
to those three shrill whistles.  
Gioconda threw open her window.  
This poor farmer's daughter

done up as the Virgin Mary  
chucked her gilded frame  
and, grabbing hold of the rope, pulled herself up...

SI-YA-U, my friend,  
you were truly lucky to fall  
to a lion-hearted woman like her...

FROM GIOCONDA'S DIARY

This thing called an airplane  
is a winged iron horse.  
Below us is Paris  
with its Eiffel Tower--  
a sharp-nosed, pock-marked, moon-like face.  
We're climbing,  
climbing higher.  
Like an arrow of fire  
we pierce  
the darkness.  
The heavens rise overhead,  
looming closer;  
the sky is like a meadow full of flowers.  
We're climbing,  
climbing higher.

.....  
.....  
.....

I must have dozed off --  
I opened my eyes.  
Dawn's moment of glory.  
The sky a calm ocean,  
our plane a ship.  
I call this smooth sailing, smooth as butter.  
Behind us a wake of smoke floats.  
Our eyes survey blue vacancies  
full of glittering discs...

Below us the earth looks  
    like a Jaffa orange  
        turning gold in the sun...  
By what magic have I  
    climbed off the ground  
        hundreds of minarets high,  
and yet to gaze down at the earth  
    my mouth still waters...

FROM THE AUTHOR'S NOTEBOOK

Now our plane swims  
    within the hot winds  
        swarming over Africa.  
Seen from above,  
    Africa looks like a huge violin.  
I swear  
they're playing Tchaikovsky on a cello  
    on the angry dark island  
        of Africa.  
And waiving his long hairy arms,  
    a gorilla is sobbing...

FROM THE AUTHOR'S NOTEBOOK

We're crossing the Indian Ocean.  
We're drinking in the air  
    like a heavy, faint-smelling syrup.  
An keeping our eyes on the yellow beacon of Singapore  
-- leaving Australia on the right,  
    Madagascar on the left --  
and putting our faith in the fuel in the tank,  
    we're heading for the China Sea...

From the journal of a deckhand named John aboard a  
British vessel in the China Sea

One night  
a typhoon blows up out of the blue.  
Man,  
what a hurricane!  
Mounted on the back of yellow devil, the Mother of God  
whirls around and around, churning up the air.  
And as luck would have it,  
I've got the watch on the foretop.  
The huge ship under me  
looks about this big!  
The wind is roaring  
blast  
after blast,  
blast  
after blast...  
The mast quivers like a strung bow.(\*)  
\*[What business do you have being way up there?  
Christ, man, what do you think you are-a stork?  
N.H.]

Oops, now we're shooting sky-high --  
my head splits the clouds.  
Oops, now we're sinking to the bottom --  
my fingers comb the ocean floor.  
We're learning to the left, we're leaning to the right --  
that is, we're leaning larboard and starboard.  
My God, we just sank!  
Oh no! This time we're sure to go under!  
The waves  
leap over my head  
like Bengal tigers.  
Fear  
leads me on  
like a coffee-colored Javanese whore.  
This is no joke -- this is the China Sea... (\*)  
\*[The deckhand has every right to be afraid.  
The rage of the China Sea is not to be taken lightly.  
N.H.]

Okay, let's keep it short.  
PLOP...

What's that?

A rectangular piece of canvas dropped from the air  
into the crows nest.

The canvas

was some kind of woman!

It struck me this madame who came from the sky  
would never understand  
our seamen's talk and ways.

I got right down and kissed her hand,  
and making like a poet, I cried:

"O you canvas woman who fell from the sky!  
Tell me, which goddess should I compare you to?  
Why did you descend here? What is your large purpose?"

She replied:

"I fell

from a 550-horsepower plane.

My name is Gioconda,

I come from Florence.

I must get to Shanghai

as soon as possible."

#### FROM GIOCONDA'S DIARY

The wind died down,  
the sea calmed down.

The ship makes strides toward Shanghai.

The sailors dream,

rocking in their sailcloth hammocks.

A song of the Indian Ocean plays

on their thick fleshy lips:

"The fire of the Indochina sun  
warms the blood

like Malacca wine.

They lure sailors to gilded stars,

those Indochina nights,

those Indochina nights.

Slant-eyed yellow Bornese cabin boys  
knifed in Singapore bars

paint the iron-belted barrels blood-red.  
Those Indochina nights, those Indochina nights.

A ship plunges on  
to Canton,  
55,000 tons.  
Those Indochina nights...  
As the moon swims in the heavens  
    like the corpse of a blue-eyed sailor  
        tossed overboard,  
Bombay watches, leaning on its elbow...  
        Bombay moon,  
                Arabian Sea.

The fire of the Indochina sun  
warms the blood  
    lie Malacca wine.  
They lure sailors to gilded stars,  
        those Indochina nights,  
                those Indochina nights..."

Part Three  
Gioconda's End

## THE CITY OF SHANGHAI

Shanghai is a big port,  
an excellent port,  
It's ships are taller than  
horned mandarin mansions.  
My, my!  
What a strange place, this Shanghai...

In the blue river boats  
with straw sails float.  
In the straw-sailed boats  
naked coolies sort rice,  
        raving of rice...  
My, my!  
What a strange place, this Shanghai...

Shanghai is a big port,  
The whites' ships are tall,  
the yellows' boats are small.  
Shanghai is pregnant with a red-headed child.  
My, my!

FROM THE AUTHOR'S NOTEBOOK

Last night  
when the ship entered the harbor  
Gioconda's foot kissed the land.  
Shanghai the soup, she the ladle,  
she searched high and low for her SI-YA-U.

FROM THE AUTHOR'S NOTEBOOK

"Chinese work! Japanese work!  
Only two people make this --  
a man and a woman.

Chinese work! Japanese work!  
Just look at the art  
in this latest work of LI-LI-FU."

Screaming at the tip of his voice,  
the Chinese magician

LI.

His shriveled yellow spider of a hand  
tossed long thin knives into the air:

one

one more

one

one more

five

one more.

Tracing lightning-like circles in the air,  
his knives flew up in a steady stream.

Gioconda looked,  
    she kept looking,  
        she'd still be looking  
but, like a large-colored Chinese lantern,  
    the crowd swayed and became confused:  
"Stand back! Gang way!  
Chiang Kai-shek's executioner  
    is hunting down a new head.  
Stand back! Make way!"

One in front and one close behind,  
two Chinese shot around the corner.  
The one in front ran toward Gioconda.  
The one racing toward her, it was him, it was him -- yes, him!  
Her SI-YA-U,  
    her dove,  
        SI-YA-U...  
A dull hollow stadium sound surrounded them.  
And in the cruel English language  
    stained red with the blood  
        of yellow Asia  
    the crown yelled:  
"He's catching up,  
he's catching up,  
    he caught-  
        catch him!"

Just three steps away from Gioconda's arms  
Chiang Kai-shek's executioner caught up.  
His sword  
    flashed...  
Thud of cut flesh and bone.  
Like a yellow sun drenched in blood  
SI-YA-U's head  
    rolled at her feet...  
And this on a death day  
Gioconda of Florence lost in Shanghai  
her smile more famous than Florence.

FROM THE AUTHOR'S NOTEBOOK



A Chinese bamboo frame.

In the frame is a painting.

Under the painting, a name:

"La Gioconda"...

In the frame is a painting:

the eyes of the painting are burning, burning.

In the frame is painting:

the painting in the frame comes alive, alive.

And suddenly

the painting jumped out of the frame

as if from a window;

her feet hit the ground.

And just as I shouted her name

she stood up straight before me:

the giant woman of a colossal struggle.

She walked ahead.

I trailed behind.

From the blazing red Tibetan sun

to the China Sea

we went and came,

we came and went.

I saw

Gioconda

sneak out under the cover of darkness

through the gates of a city in enemy hands;

I saw her

in a skirmish of drawn bayonets

strangle a British officer;

I saw her

at the head of a blue stream swimming with stars

wash the lice from her dirty shirt...

Huffling and puffing, a wood-burning engine

dragged behind it

forty red cars seating forty people each.

The cars passed one by one.

In the last car I saw her

standing watch:

a frayed lambskin hat on her head,

boots on her feet,

a leather jacket on her back...

#### FROM THE AUTHOR'S NOTEBOOK

Ah, my patient reader!

Now we find ourselves in the French  
military court in Shanghai.

The bench:

four generals, fourteen colonels,  
and an armed black Congolese regiment.

The accused:

Gioconda.

The attorney for the defense:

an overly razed

--that is, overly artistic--

French painter.

The scene is set.

We're starting.

The defense attorney presents his case:

"Gentlemen,

this masterpiece

that stands in your presence as the accused  
is the most accomplished daughter of a great artist.

Gentlemen,

this masterpiece...

Gentlemen...

my mind is on fire...

Gentlemen...

Renaissance...

Gentlemen,

this masterpiece--

twice this masterpiece...

Gentlemen, uniformed gentlemen..."

"C-U-U-U-T!

Enough.

stop sputtering like a jammed machine gun!  
Bailiff,  
    read the verdict."

The bailiff reads the verdict:

"The laws of France  
    have been violated in China  
by the above-named Gioconda, daughter of one Leonardo.  
Accordingly,  
    we sentence the accused  
        to death  
            by burning.  
And tomorrow night at moonrise,  
a Senegalese regiment  
        will execute said decision  
            of this military court..."

## THE BURNING

Shanghai is a big port.  
The whites have tall ships,  
the yellows' boats are small.  
A thick whistle.  
        A thin Chinese scream.  
A ship steaming into the harbor  
        capsized a straw-sailed boat...  
Moonlight.  
Night.  
Handcuffed,  
        Gioconda waits.  
Blow, wind, blow...  
A voice:  
"All right, the lighter.  
Burn, Gioconda, burn..."  
A silhouette advances,  
a flash...  
They lit the lighter

and set Gioconda on fire.  
The flames painted Gioconda red.  
She laughed with a smile that came from her heart.  
Gioconda burned laughing...

Art, Shmart, Masterpiece, Shmasterpiece, And So On,  
And So Forth,  
Immortality, Eternity-  
H-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-E-Y...

"HERE ENDS MY TALE'S CONTENDING,  
THE REST IS LIES UNENDING..."  
THE END

Nazim Hikmet - 1929

Trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk 1993

FOOTNOTE:

GIOCONDA AND SI-YA-U: Si-Ya-U, Hsiao San (b. 1896), Chinese revolutionary and man of letters. Hikmet met him in Moscow in 1922 and believed he had been executed in the bloody 1927 crackdown on Shanghai radicals after returning to China via Paris in 1924, when the Mona Lisa did in fact disappear from the Louvre. The two friends were reunited in Vienna in 1951 and traveled to Peking together in 1952. Translated into Chinese, this poem was later burned-along with Hsiao's works- in the Cultural Revolution.

Nazim Hikmet

# Hiroshima Child

I come and stand at every door  
But none can hear my silent tread  
I knock and yet remain unseen  
For I am dead for I am dead

I'm only seven though I died  
In Hiroshima long ago  
I'm seven now as I was then  
When children die they do not grow

My hair was scorched by swirling flame  
My eyes grew dim my eyes grew blind  
Death came and turned my bones to dust  
And that was scattered by the wind

I need no fruit I need no rice  
I need no sweets nor even bread  
I ask for nothing for myself  
For I am dead for I am dead

All that I need is that for peace  
You fight today you fight today  
So that the children of this world  
Can live and grow and laugh and play

Nazim Hikmet

# Hymn To Life

The hair falling on your forehead  
suddenly lifted.  
Suddenly something stirred on the ground.  
The trees are whispering  
in the dark.  
Your bare arms will be cold.

Far off  
where we can't see,  
the moon must be rising.  
It hasn't reached us yet,  
slipping through the leaves  
to light up your shoulder.  
But I know  
a wind comes up with the moon.  
The trees are whispering.  
Your bare arms will be cold.

From above,  
from the branches lost in the dark,  
something dropped at your feet.  
You moved closer to me.  
Under my hand your bare flesh is like the fuzzy skin of a fruit.  
Neither a song of the heart nor "common sense"--  
before the trees, birds, and insects,  
my hand on my wife's flesh  
is thinking.  
Tonight my hand  
can't read or write.  
Neither loving nor unloving...  
It's the tongue of a leopard at a spring,  
a grape leaf,  
a wolf's paw.  
To move, breathe, eat, drink.  
My hand is like a seed  
splitting open underground.  
Neither a song of the heart nor "common sense,"  
neither loving nor unloving.  
My hand thinking on my wife's flesh

is the hand of the first man.

Like a root that finds water underground,

it says to me:

"To eat, drink, cold, hot, struggle, smell, color--

not to live in order to die

but to die to live..."

And now

as red female hair blows across my face,

as something stirs on the ground,

as the trees whisper in the dark,

and as the moon rises far off

where we can't see,

my hand on my wife's flesh

before the trees, birds, and insects,

I want the right of life,

of the leopard at the spring, of the seed splitting open--

I want the right of the first man.

Trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (1993)

Nazim Hikmet

# I Love You

I love you

like dipping bread into salt and eating

Like waking up at night with high fever

and drinking water, with the tap in my mouth

Like unwrapping the heavy box from the postman

with no clue what it is

fluttering, happy, doubtful

I love you

like flying over the sea in a plane for the first time

Like something moves inside me

when it gets dark softly in Istanbul

I love you

Like thanking God that we live.

Nazim Hikmet



# I Think Of You...

I think of you  
and I feel the scent of my mother  
my mother, the most beautiful of all.

You are on the carousel of the festival inside me  
you hover around, your skirt and your hair flying  
Mere seconds between finding your beautiful face and losing it.

What is the reason,  
why do I remember you like a wound on my heart  
what is the reason that I hear your voice when you are so far  
and I can't help getting up with excitement?

I kneel down and look at your hands  
I want to touch your hands  
but I can't  
you are behind a glass.  
Sweetheart, I am a bewildered spectator of the drama  
that I am playing in my twilight.

Nazim Hikmet

# I Want To Die Before You

I  
want to die before you.  
Do you think that who passes later  
will find who's gone before?  
I don't think so.  
You'd better have me burned,  
and put me on the stove in your room  
in a jar.  
The jar shall be made of glass,  
transparent, white glass  
so that you can see me inside...  
You see my sacrifice:  
I renounced from being part of the earth,  
I renounced from being a flower  
to be able to stay with you.  
And I am becoming dust,  
to live with you.  
Later, when you also die,  
you'll come to my jar.  
And we'll live there together  
your ash in my ash,  
until a careless bride  
or an unfaithful grandson  
throws us out of there...  
But we  
until that time  
will mix  
with each other  
so much that  
even in the garbage we are thrown into  
our grains will fall side by side.  
We will dive into the soil together.  
And one day, if a wild flower  
feeds from this piece of soil and blossoms  
above its body, definitely  
there will be two flowers:  
one is you  
one is me.  
I

don't think of death yet.  
I will give birth to a child.  
Life is flooding from me.  
My blood is boiling.  
I will live, but long, very long,  
but with you.  
Death doesn't scare me either.  
But I find our way of funeral  
rather unlikable.  
Until I die,  
I think this will get better.  
Is there a hope you'll get out of prison these days?  
A voice in me says:  
maybe.

Nazim Hikmet

## It's This Way

I stand in the advancing light,  
my hands hungry, the world beautiful.

My eyes can't get enough of the trees--  
they're so hopeful, so green.

A sunny road runs through the mulberries,  
I'm at the window of the prison infirmary.

I can't smell the medicines--  
carnations must be blooming nearby.

It's this way:  
being captured is beside the point,  
the point is not to surrender.

Trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (1993)

Nazim Hikmet

# Last Will And Testament

Comrades, if I don't live to see the day  
-- I mean, if I die before freedom comes --  
take me away  
and bury me in a village cemetery in Anatolia.

The worker Osman whom Hassan Bey ordered shot  
can lie on one side of me, and on the other side  
the martyr Aysha, who gave birth in the rye  
and died inside of forty days.

Tractors and songs can pass below the cemetery --  
in the dawn light, new people, the smell of burnt gasoline,  
fields held in common, water in canals,  
no drought or fear of the police.

Of course, we won't hear those songs:  
the dead lie stretched out underground  
and rot like black branches,  
deaf, dumb, and blind under the earth.

But, I sang those songs  
before they were written,  
I smelled the burnt gasoline  
before the blueprints for the tractors were drawn.

As for my neighbors,  
the worker Osman and the martyr Aysha,  
they felt the great longing while alive,  
maybe without even knowing it.

Comrades, if I die before that day, I mean  
-- and it's looking more and more likely --  
bury me in a village cemetery in Anatolia,  
and if there's one handy,  
    a plane tree could stand at my head,  
    I wouldn't need a stone or anything.

Moscow, Barviha Hospital

Trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (1993)

Nazim Hikmet

# Letter To My Wife

11-11-1933

Bursa Prison

My one and only!

Your last letter says:

"My head is throbbing,  
my heart is stunned!"

You say:

"If they hang you,  
if I lose you,  
I'll die!"

You'll live, my dear--

my memory will vanish like black smoke in the wind.

Of course you'll live, red-haired lady of my heart:

in the twentieth century

grief lasts

at most a year.

Death--

a body swinging from a rope.

My heart

can't accept such a death.

But

you can bet

if some poor gypsy's hairy black  
spidery hand

slips a noose

around my neck,

they'll look in vain for fear

in Nazim's

blue eyes!

In the twilight of my last morning

I

will see my friends and you,

and I'll go

to my grave

regretting nothing but an unfinished song...

My wife!

Good-hearted,

golden,

eyes sweeter than honey--my bee!  
Why did I write you  
                  they want to hang me?  
The trial has hardly begun,  
and they don't just pluck a man's head  
                  like a turnip.  
Look, forget all this.  
If you have any money,  
                  buy me some flannel underwear:  
my sciatica is acting up again.  
And don't forget,  
a prisoner's wife  
                  must always think good thoughts.

Trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (1993)

Nazim Hikmet



# Letters From A Man In Solitary

1  
I carved your name on my watchband  
with my fingernail.  
Where I am, you know,  
I don't have a pearl-handled jackknife  
(they won't give me anything sharp)  
    or a plane tree with its head in the clouds.  
Trees may grow in the yard,  
but I'm not allowed  
    to see the sky overhead...  
How many others are in this place?  
I don't know.  
I'm alone far from them,  
they're all together far from me.  
To talk anyone besides myself  
    is forbidden.  
So I talk to myself.  
But I find my conversation so boring,  
    my dear wife, that I sing songs.  
And what do you know,  
that awful, always off-key voice of mine  
    touches me so  
        that my heart breaks.  
And just like the barefoot orphan  
    lost in the snow  
in those old sad stories, my heart  
-- with moist blue eyes  
and a little red runny rose --  
    wants to snuggle up in your arms.  
It doesn't make me blush  
    that right now  
        I'm this weak,  
        this selfish,  
            this human simply.  
No doubt my state can be explained  
physiologically, psychologically, etc.  
Or maybe it's  
    this barred window,  
    this earthen jug,

these four walls,  
which for months have kept me from hearing  
another human voice.

It's five o'clock, my dear.

Outside,

with its dryness,

      eerie whispers,

                  mud roof,

and lame, skinny horse

   standing motionless in infinity

-- I mean, it's enough to drive the man inside crazy with grief --

outside, with all its machinery and all its art,

a plains night comes down red on treeless space.

Again today, night will fall in no time.

A light will circle the lame, skinny horse.

And the treeless space, in this hopeless landscape  
stretched out before me like the body of a hard man,  
will suddenly be filled with stars.

We'll reach the inevitable end once more,

which is to say the stage is set

again today for an elaborate nostalgia.

Me,

the man inside,

once more I'll exhibit my customary talent,

and singing an old-fashioned lament

in the reedy voice of my childhood,

once more, by God, it will crush my unhappy heart

to hear you inside my head,

so far

away, as if I were watching you

                  in a smoky, broken mirror...

2

It's spring outside, my dear wife, spring.

Outside on the plain, suddenly the smell  
of fresh earth, birds singing, etc.

It's spring, my dear wife,

the plain outside sparkles...

And inside the bed comes alive with bugs,

                  the water jug no longer freezes,

and in the morning sun floods the concrete...

The sun--

every day till noon now

it comes and goes

from me, flashing off

and on...

And as the day turns to afternoon, shadows climb the walls,

the glass of the barred window catches fire,

and it's night outside,

a cloudless spring night...

And inside this is spring's darkest hour.

In short, the demon called freedom,

with its glittering scales and fiery eyes,

possesses the man inside

especially in spring...

I know this from experience, my dear wife,

from experience...

3

Sunday today.

Today they took me out in the sun for the first time.

And I just stood there, struck for the first time in my life

by how far away the sky is,

how blue

and how wide.

Then I respectfully sat down on the earth.

I leaned back against the wall.

For a moment no trap to fall into,

no struggle, no freedom, no wife.

Only earth, sun, and me...

I am happy.

Trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (1993)

Nazim Hikmet

# Lion In An Iron Cage

Look at the lion in the iron cage,  
look deep into his eyes:  
    like two naked steel daggers  
    they sparkle with anger.  
But he never loses his dignity  
    although his anger  
        comes and goes  
        goes and comes.

You couldn't find a place for a collar  
round his thick, furry mane.  
Although the scars of a whip  
    still burn on his yellow back  
his long legs  
    stretch and end  
    in the shape of two copper claws.  
The hairs on his mane rise one by one  
    around his proud head.  
His hatred  
    comes and goes  
    goes and comes ...

The shadow of my brother on the wall of the dungeon  
    moves  
        up and down  
        up and down.

Nazim Hikmet

# On Living

I

Living is no laughing matter:

you must live with great seriousness

like a squirrel, for example--

I mean without looking for something beyond and above living,

I mean living must be your whole occupation.

Living is no laughing matter:

you must take it seriously,

so much so and to such a degree

that, for example, your hands tied behind your back,

your back to the wall,

or else in a laboratory

in your white coat and safety glasses,

you can die for people--

even for people whose faces you've never seen,

even though you know living

is the most real, the most beautiful thing.

I mean, you must take living so seriously

that even at seventy, for example, you'll plant olive trees--

and not for your children, either,

but because although you fear death you don't believe it,

because living, I mean, weighs heavier.

II

Let's say you're seriously ill, need surgery--

which is to say we might not get

from the white table.

Even though it's impossible not to feel sad

about going a little too soon,

we'll still laugh at the jokes being told,

we'll look out the window to see it's raining,

or still wait anxiously

for the latest newscast ...

Let's say we're at the front--

for something worth fighting for, say.

There, in the first offensive, on that very day,

we might fall on our face, dead.  
We'll know this with a curious anger,  
but we'll still worry ourselves to death  
about the outcome of the war, which could last years.  
Let's say we're in prison  
and close to fifty,  
and we have eighteen more years, say,  
before the iron doors will open.  
We'll still live with the outside,  
with its people and animals, struggle and wind--  
I mean with the outside beyond the walls.  
I mean, however and wherever we are,  
we must live as if we will never die.

### III

This earth will grow cold,  
a star among stars  
and one of the smallest,  
a gilded mote on blue velvet--  
I mean this, our great earth.  
This earth will grow cold one day,  
not like a block of ice  
or a dead cloud even  
but like an empty walnut it will roll along  
in pitch-black space ...  
You must grieve for this right now  
--you have to feel this sorrow now--  
for the world must be loved this much  
if you're going to say "I lived" ...

Trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (1993)

Nazim Hikmet

# On The Fifth Day Of A Hunger Strike

My brothers,  
Forgive me if I'm unable to say  
honestly and straightforwardly  
all that I would like to say to you  
I'm drunk, my head is light, it spins,  
not from raki  
but from hunger.  
My brothers,  
I'm European, I'm Asian, I'm American,  
In this month of May  
I'm not in jail or on a hunger strike,  
But lying at night in a meadow  
With your eyes as near to mine as the stars  
And your hands in mine as a single hand  
like the hand of my mother  
like the hand of my helpmate  
like the hand of life.  
My brothers,  
You, at least, have never abandoned me,  
Not me or my country or my people.  
I know that you love me and love what's ours  
As I love you and love what's yours.  
And for this  
I thank you, my brothers,  
I thank you.  
My brothers,  
I have no intention of dying.  
And if I am killed  
I know  
I'll go on living  
in your thoughts.  
I'll live in the lines of Aragon-  
in every line that describes  
the coming of beautiful days-  
And in the pigeons of Picasso,  
And in the folksongs of Robson...  
And more beautiful than anything else  
more triumphant than anything else  
I'll live in the jubilant laughter

of a comrade on strike day  
in the port of Marseilles.  
My brothers,  
Since you really wish me to talk again,  
I'm so happy, so happy,  
that I spurt the words out!

Nazim Hikmet



# Optimistic Man

as a child he never plucked the wings off flies  
he didn't tie tin cans to cats' tails  
or lock beetles in matchboxes  
or stomp anthills  
he grew up  
and all those things were done to him  
I was at his bedside when he died  
he said read me a poem  
about the sun and the sea  
about nuclear reactors and satellites  
about the greatness of humanity

Nazim Hikmet

# Our Eyes

Our eyes  
    are limpid  
        drops of water.  
In each drop exists  
    a tiny sign  
        of our genius  
which has given life to cold iron.  
Our eyes  
    are limpid  
        drops of water  
merged absolutely in the Ocean  
that you could hardly recognize  
    the drop in a block of ice  
        in a boiling pan.  
The masterpiece of these eyes  
    the fulfillment of their genius  
        the living iron.  
In these eyes  
    filled with limpid  
        pure tears  
had failed to emerge  
    from the infinite Ocean  
if the strength  
        had dispersed,  
we could never have mated  
    the dynamo with the turbine,  
never have moved  
    those steel mountains in water  
easily  
    as if made of hollow wood.  
The masterpiece of these eyes  
    the fulfillment of their genius  
        of our unified labour  
        the living iron.

Translated by Taner Baybars



## Poems For Piraye (9 To 10 O'clock Poems)

Remembering you is good  
in prison  
amid the news  
of victory and death  
as my fortieth year passes...

Remembering you is good  
your hand  
forgotten upon a blue dress  
your hair  
with the grave softness  
of the earth of my beloved Istanbul.  
This joy of loving you  
is like a second person inside me...  
The smell of geranium leaves  
on your fingertips  
warm and comforting  
The invitation of your flesh  
a hot  
intense darkness  
scored by vivid red lines...

Remembering you is good  
or writing about you  
as I lie on my back  
in prison  
thinking of such and such a day  
at such and such a place  
of some words you said  
not of the words so much  
but of the world and you within them...

Remembering you is good  
I must carve some things for you again  
a jewel box  
a ring  
I must weave a length of thin silk  
then jump up  
and clutching the window bars

shout what I have written for you  
to the innocent blue  
of freedom.

Remembering you is good  
in prison  
amid the news  
of victory and death  
as my fortieth year passes...  
1942

At this late hour  
on this autumn night  
I am filled with your words.  
Eternal  
like time like matter  
Naked  
like an eye  
Heavy  
like a hand  
Words which sparkle  
like stars.  
Your words came to me  
from your heart  
your head  
your body  
Your words delivered you  
mother  
woman  
comrade  
Your words were sad  
they were bitter  
hopeful  
heroic  
Your words were human.  
September 20, 1945

Our son is sick  
his father in prison  
your heavy head  
fallen in your tired palms  
the laughter drained from your golden eyes.

People  
will surely carry people  
on to sunnier days  
our son will get well  
his father out of prison  
your golden eyes  
will fill with laughter once more...  
Our fate  
is the world's fate.  
September 21, 1945

Reading books  
you're there inside me  
Hearing songs  
you're inside me  
Eating my bread  
you're sitting before me  
Or at my work  
you're before me.  
You're my 'silent partner'  
everywhere.  
Although we cannot speak  
Although we cannot hear  
each other's voices.  
You're my widow of eight years.  
September 22, 1945

What is she doing now  
this second, this very second?  
Is she at home, outside,  
working, lying down, on her feet?  
could she be raising her arm?  
O my love!  
how this movement bares  
her strong white wrist!  
What is she doing now  
this second, this very second?  
Perhaps she has a kitten on her lap,  
she's petting it.  
Or, perhaps she's walking, about to step.  
O those feet I cherish,

those feet which bring her to me  
on tip-toe when days are dark...  
And what is she thinking about,  
of me?  
Or, who knows,  
why the beans take so long to cook?  
Or, even,  
why the majority of men are so miserable?  
What is she thinking now  
this second, this very second?  
September 23, 1945

The loveliest sea  
is the sea not yet traveled  
The loveliest child  
is the child not yet born  
Our loveliest days  
are those we have not yet lived through.  
And the loveliest word I would say to you  
is the word that I have not yet said.  
September 24, 1945

Squatting, I look at the earth  
I look at the grasses  
I look at the insects  
I look at the deep blue flowers opening from stems.  
I look at you, my love,  
You are like the spring earth.  
Stretched out on my back, I see the sky  
I see the tree's branches  
I see the storks flying  
I see you, my love,  
You are like the spring sky.  
Lighting a night fire, I touch the fire  
I touch the water  
I touch the cloth  
I touch the silver  
I touch you, my love  
You are the fire lit beneath the stars.  
Inside of people, I love people  
I love action  
I love thinking

I love my struggle  
I love you, my love,  
You are a person inside my struggle.  
1945

9 PM  
horns blare in the yard  
soon they will close the cell doors.  
This prison term  
is longer than the others  
nearly eight years now...  
Living is a labor of hope, my love,  
living is a serious business  
like loving you...  
September 25, 1945

They enslaved us  
threw us in prison  
me  
inside the walls  
you  
outside the walls.  
But that is nothing,  
the true evil is that  
knowingly  
or unknowingly  
a man carries the prison  
inside himself...  
Most of the men  
fallen to this state  
are honorable  
hard-working  
good men,  
and deserve to be loved  
as I love you.  
September 26, 1945

Thinking of you  
is a beautiful thing  
a hopeful thing  
a thing like hearing  
the most beautiful song



from the world's most beautiful voice...  
But hope no longer is enough for me  
I no longer want to hear the song—  
I want to sing it...  
September 30, 1945

Above the mountain  
there is a cloud  
swollen with sun above the mountain.  
Another day  
passed without you  
with and without the world another day.  
They will open soon  
in bursts of red  
nightflowers will open in bursts of red.  
Soundless bold wings  
carry our separation  
that separation like an exile  
from the homeland...  
October 1, 1945

The wind flows by  
no cherry branch moves  
with the same wind twice.  
Birds chatter in the trees:  
wings poised for flight.  
A closed door:  
waiting to be thrown open.  
I want you  
I want life to be as lovely  
and friendly and good as you.  
I know this feast of misery  
is not yet finished.  
But it will be finished...  
October 2, 1945

Both of us know, my love,  
they taught us  
the hunger, the shivering,  
the withering exhaustion,  
the separation from each other.  
Still, we have not been forced to kill

nor tasted the moment of being killed.

Both of us know, my love,  
we can teach them  
to fight for our people  
to love each day  
a little stronger  
a little more from our souls...  
October 5, 1945

Clouds pass, heavy  
and swollen with news,  
Crushing in my fist  
the letter that hasn't come yet,  
Tears in the corners of my eyes,  
goodbyes said to the endless earth,  
And I want to shout: Piraye!  
Pi-ra-ye!  
October 6, 1945

At night, the wind carries the cries of men  
across the open seas  
At night, there is danger still in straying  
across the open seas.  
This field, unplowed for six years,  
still bears the tracks of tank treads  
This winter, the snow will cover  
these untouched tracks of tank treads.  
Ah, my dearest, the antennas are lying again  
so that the merchants of sweat can close  
with 100% profits.  
But those who have returned from Azrail's feast  
have returned with their decisions made...  
October 7, 1945

I've become unbearable again  
sleepless, petty, cross.  
You can see  
I'm working one day  
like a blasphemous shrew  
like a raging animal.  
And then

I'm on my back the next day  
from morning to evening  
a lazy folksong in my mouth  
like a cigarette that has gone out.  
The hate  
and the pity I feel for myself  
hold me totally in their grasp.  
I've become unbearable again  
sleepless, petty, cross.  
As always, I'm unfair.  
Without any reason  
or any possibility of one,  
and even though it's a vile humiliation  
I can't help it,  
I'm jealous.  
Forgive me...  
October 8, 1945

Last night I had a dream:  
You were sitting at my feet,  
You raised your head, turned  
Your enormous golden eyes to me,  
And asked a question,  
Your wet lips opened and closed,  
But I didn't hear your voice.  
The hour struck as though somewhere  
There was good news in the night.  
Whispers of endlessness in the air,  
My canary in its red cage  
Singing the Song of Memo.  
The small cracking sounds of seeds  
Pushing and lifting the earth,  
And the just and triumphant humming  
Of some gathering comes to my ear.  
Your wet lips still opened and closed,  
But I didn't hear your voice.  
I awoke in a nervous uncertainty.  
I had fallen asleep over my book, it seems,  
But I am wondering now  
Whether all those voices were not your voice?  
October 9, 1945

Looking in your eyes  
I am drunk with the smell of warm earth  
lost in a wheat field among the stalks...  
Your eyes  
are like an eternal substance, changing endlessly  
pits without bottom, with flashes of green...  
whose secret is given up a little each day  
but never completely surrendered.  
October 10, 1945

When I leave the prison to meet my death  
And when we turn for the last time  
to look at the city,  
We shall be able to say these words, my love:  
'Though you never made our hearts rejoice,  
we worked hard as we could  
thinking we could make you happy.  
Roads to happiness lead on, as life goes on.  
We are content, our hearts are satisfied  
with the bread we earned;  
Our eyes bear the afflictions  
of separation from your light.  
See, we have come  
and now we are going.  
May you be happy,  
city of Aleppo...'  
October 18, 1945

We are one half of an apple  
the other half is this enormous world  
We are one half of an apple  
the other half is our people  
You are one half of an apple  
I am the other half  
we are two...  
October 27, 1945

The smell rises from the geraniums  
The waves hum on the seas  
Autumn is here with its full clouds  
And intelligent earth...

My love, the year has reached its maturity.  
It seems that we have known  
Perhaps a thousand years' worth of life,  
But we are still wide-eyed children  
Running hand in hand in the sun...  
October 28, 1945

Forget the flowering almond trees.  
Why think of that which cannot be regained?  
Dry your wet hair in the sun,  
Your hair with the smell of ripe fruit,  
That shines, heavy and damp, with redness.  
My love, my love,  
the season is autumn...  
November 5, 1945

From above the roofs  
of my distant city,  
passing the tip  
of the Marmara sea,  
flying over  
the autumn earth  
Came your voice—  
moist and mature—  
For three minutes.  
Then, the telephone  
was closed down  
like pitch darkness...  
November 8, 1945

The last southwinds have begun to blow  
warm and humming  
like blood pouring from a vein.  
I listen to the weather:  
it's pulse is slowing down.  
There is snow on Olympia's peak.  
On the Kirezli plateau  
the bears with great charm and majesty  
lie down on the chestnut leaves to sleep.  
The poplars on the plain undress.  
Silkworm eggs will be taken soon  
to their winter shelter.

Autumn is about to end,  
The earth to enter its pregnant sleep.  
And we will pass again one more winter  
with this great rage inside,  
warming ourselves in the fire  
of our sacred hope...  
November 12, 1945

They say  
it doesn't allow description—  
the misery of Istanbul.  
They say  
the people are crushed by hunger.  
They say  
tuberculosis lurks everywhere.  
And the young girls, they say,  
are taken in the ruins  
and in theater loges.

This black news comes  
from my distant city,  
from the city of hard-working  
honest people,  
from the real Istanbul,  
My love,  
from the city which is your home,  
which I carry on my back in a bag  
wherever I am exiled  
wherever I am in prison  
Which I bear in my heart  
like the grieving for a lost child  
like your image  
which I hold in my eyes...  
November 13, 1945

Although you'll find carnations still  
in vases now and then,  
seeds are being scattered in the fields  
plowed up long ago for planting  
and olives, stuffed with oil,  
are being picked now.  
On one side we're moving into winter

on another the earth is being opened  
for the seedlings of spring.  
As for me  
filled with longing  
and heavy with impatience  
for great travels,  
I am lying in Bursa  
like a ship at anchor...  
November 20, 1945

Take out from your chest  
the dress you wore  
the first time I saw you  
and dress up  
like the spring trees.  
Put in your hair the carnation  
I am sending you from prison,  
Lift your broad forehead  
white and creased with those lines  
that should be kissed,  
And by no means look tired  
or worried on such a day.  
The wife of Nazim Hikmet must be beautiful  
like the flag of a rebellion  
on such a day!  
December 4, 1945

A hole wore through the ship's hull  
the slaves cut to pieces their chains  
the wind from the northeast blew  
about to hurl the ship upon the rocks.  
This world  
this pirate ship  
will sink.  
Whatever happens  
it will sink.  
And we will create  
a free, spacious, hopeful world  
like your face  
my Piraye...  
December 5, 1945

They are the enemies of hope, my love,  
the enemies of a life  
that grows and develops  
of a tree that bears fruit  
of water that flows.  
Because death is stamped on their foreheads—  
their teeth rot  
their flesh decays—  
They'll disappear  
and never come back.  
And surely, my love,  
surely this lovely country of mine  
will be a garden of brothers  
without masters or slaves...  
December 6, 1945

Enemy to Receb  
the towel-maker in Bursa  
Enemy to Hasan  
the fitter in Karabük factory  
Enemy to the woman Hatçe  
the village peasant  
Enemy to Süleyman  
the worker  
Enemy to me  
Enemy to you  
Enemy to thinking men.  
My love, they are the enemy  
of the country which houses them.  
December 7, 1945

On the plain  
trees burn in a final effort  
spangles of gold  
copper  
brass and bronze.  
Hooves of oxen  
slowly, softly  
two by two sink  
in dampened earth.  
And the mountains are soaked and gray  
submerged in mist...



It's finished.  
Perhaps this day is all  
that is left of autumn.  
And now the wild geese wing past  
heading for Iznik lake.  
Something cool in the air  
like the smell of soot in the air  
the smell of snow in the air...  
Now to be outside!  
Now to charge a horse straight for the mountains!  
'But you don't know how to ride,' you'll say.  
Don't laugh at me  
and don't be jealous  
This new love of nature  
I've acquired in prison  
I love almost  
but not as much  
as I love you...  
And both of you so far away...  
December 12, 1945

Snow suddenly set in at night  
morning began with crows  
scattering from white branches.  
Winter on the Bursa plain  
past the eye's reaching  
recalling endlessness.

My love, the season  
burst through to change  
after continuous struggle,  
And proud,  
working hard beneath the snow  
Life  
still pushing on  
and up...  
December 13, 1945

Damn, the winter has come down hard.  
Who knows what's happened to you  
and to my Istanbul.  
Have you coal?

Can you get wood?  
Stuff newspaper in the window cracks,  
and go to bed early.  
There's nothing in the house to sell,  
I know...  
Even when we shiver  
half hungry  
half full  
Even in this we are in the majority  
in our country  
in our city  
in the world.  
December 14, 1945

Nazim Hikmet

# 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 sixth 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!

Trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (1993)

Nazim Hikmet

# Since I've Been In Jail

Since I've been in jail  
the world has turned around the sun ten times  
And if you ask the earth, it will say:  
'It's not worth mentioning,  
a microscopic time.'  
And if you ask me, I will say:  
'It's ten years of my life.'  
I had a pencil  
the year I came to jail.  
It wore out in a week from writing.  
And if you ask the pencil, it will say:  
'A whole life.'  
And if you ask me, I will say:  
'It's nothing, a mere week.'  
Osman who was jailed for murder  
completed a seven-year stretch and left  
since I've been in jail.  
He wandered around outside for a while,  
and then got jailed again for smuggling.  
He served a six-month term and left again,  
and yesterday a letter came saying he's married  
and a child will be born in the spring.  
Now they're ten years old  
the children who fell from their mothers' womb  
that year I came to jail,  
And the colts of that year who had long thin shaky legs  
have long since become docile broad-rumped mares.  
But the olive shoots are still shoots  
and they're still children.  
New squares have opened up in my distant city  
since I've been in jail.  
And our family  
is living in a house I've never seen  
on a street I don't know.  
The bread was pure white, like cotton,  
the year I came to jail.  
Later it was rationed out,  
And we here on the inside beat one another  
for a piece of black crust the size of a fist.

Now it's free again,  
But brown and tasteless.  
The year I came to jail  
The Second One had just begun.  
The ovens in Dachau Camp were not yet lit,  
The atom bomb was not yet hurled upon Hiroshima.  
Time flowed like the blood of a child with his throat cut.  
Later that chapter was officially closed,  
Now American dollars are talking about a Third.  
But in spite of everything, the days have brightened  
since I've been in jail,  
And about half of them  
'put their heavy hands on the pavement  
and on the edge of darkness  
straightened up.'  
Since I've been in jail  
the world has turned around the sun ten times.  
And again I repeat with the same passion  
what I wrote for them  
the year I came to jail:  
'They  
whose number is as great  
as ants on the earth  
fish in the water  
birds in the sky  
are fearful and brave  
ignorant and learned  
and they are children,  
And they  
who destroy and create  
it is only their adventure in these songs.'  
And for the rest,  
for example, my lying here for ten years,  
it's nothing...

Nazim Hikmet

# Some Advice To Those Who Will Serve Time In Prison

If instead of being hanged by the neck  
you're thrown inside  
for not giving up hope  
in the world, your country, your people,  
if you do ten or fifteen years  
apart from the time you have left,  
you won't say,  
"Better I had swung from the end of a rope  
like a flag" --

You'll put your foot down and live.  
It may not be a pleasure exactly,  
but it's your solemn duty  
to live one more day  
to spite the enemy.

Part of you may live alone inside,  
like a tone at the bottom of a well.  
But the other part  
must be so caught up  
in the flurry of the world  
that you shiver there inside  
when outside, at forty days' distance, a leaf moves.  
To wait for letters inside,  
to sing sad songs,  
or to lie awake all night staring at the ceiling  
is sweet but dangerous.

Look at your face from shave to shave,  
forget your age,  
watch out for lice  
and for spring nights,  
and always remember  
to eat every last piece of bread--  
also, don't forget to laugh heartily.  
And who knows,  
the woman you love may stop loving you.  
Don't say it's no big thing:  
it's like the snapping of a green branch  
to the man inside.

To think of roses and gardens inside is bad,  
to think of seas and mountains is good.

Read and write without rest,  
and I also advise weaving  
and making mirrors.

I mean, it's not that you can't pass  
ten or fifteen years inside  
and more --

you can,  
as long as the jewel  
on the left side of your chest doesn't lose its luster!

May 1949

Trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (1993)

Nazim Hikmet



# The Faces Of Our Women

Mary didn't give birth to God.  
Mary isn't the mother of God.  
Mary is one mother among many mothers.  
Mary gave birth to a son,  
a son among many sons.  
That's why Mary is so beautiful in all the pictures of her.  
That's why Mary's son is so close to us, like our own sons.  
The faces of our women are the book of our pains.  
Our pains, our faults and the blood we shed  
carve scars on the faces of our women like plows.  
And our joys are reflected in the eyes of women  
like the dawns glowing on the lakes.  
Our imaginations are on the faces of women we love.  
Whether we see them or not, they are before us,  
closest to our realities and furthest.

Nazim Hikmet

# The Japanese Fisherman

A young Japanese fisherman was killed  
by a cloud at sea.

I heard this song from his friends,  
one lurid yellow evening on the Pacific.

Those who eat the fish we caught, die.  
Those who touch our hands, die,  
This ship is a black coffin,  
you'll die if you come up the gangplank.

Those who eat the fish we caught, die,  
not straight away, but slowly,  
slowly their flesh rots, falls off.  
Those who eat the fish we caught, die.

Those who touch our hands, die.  
Our loyal, hardworking hands  
washed by salt and sun.  
Those who touch our hands, die,  
not straight away, but slowly,  
slowly their flesh rots, falls off.  
Those who touch our hands, die.

Almond Eyes, forget me.  
This ship is a black coffin,  
you'll die if you come up the gangplank.  
The cloud has passed over us.

Almond Eyes, forget me.  
Don't hug me my darling,  
you'll catch death from me.  
Almond Eyes, forget me.

This ship is a black coffin.  
Almond Eyes, forget me.  
The child you have from me  
will be rotten from a rotten egg.  
This ship is a black coffin.  
This sea is a dead sea.

Human beings, where are you?  
Where are you?

Nazim Hikmet

# The Miniature Woman

The Blue-Eyed Giant, the Miniature Woman  
and the Honeysuckle

He was a blue-eyed giant,  
He loved a miniature woman.  
The woman's dream was of a miniature house  
with a garden where honeysuckle grows  
in a riot of colours  
that sort of house.

The giant loved like a giant,  
and his hands were used to such big things  
that the giant could not  
make the building,  
could not knock on the door  
of the garden where the honeysuckle grows  
in a riot of colours  
at that house.

He was a blue-eyed giant,  
he loved a miniature woman,  
a mini miniature woman.  
The woman was hungry for comfort  
and tired of the giant's long strides.  
And bye bye off she went to the embraces of a rich dwarf with a garden where  
the honeysuckle grows  
in a riot of colours  
that sort of house.

Now the blue-eyed giant realizes,  
a giant isn't even a graveyard for love:  
in the garden where the honeysuckle grows  
in a riot of colours  
that sort of house...

Nazim Hikmet

# The Strangest Creature On Earth

You're like a scorpion, my brother,  
you live in cowardly darkness  
                    like a scorpion.

You're like a sparrow, my brother,  
always in a sparrow's flutter.

You're like a clam, my brother,  
closed like a clam, content,

And you're frightening, my brother,  
                    like the mouth of an extinct volcano.

Not one,  
    not five--  
unfortunately, you number millions.

You're like a sheep, my brother:  
                    when the cloaked drover raises his stick,  
                                    you quickly join the flock  
and run, almost proudly, to the slaughterhouse.

I mean you're strangest creature on earth--  
even stranger than the fish  
                    that couldn't see the ocean for the water.

And the oppression in this world  
                    is thanks to you.

And if we're hungry, tired, covered with blood,  
and still being crushed like grapes for our wine,  
                                    the fault is yours--

I can hardly bring myself to say it,  
but most of the fault, my dear brother, is yours.

Trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (1993)

Nazim Hikmet

# The Walnut Tree

my head foaming clouds, sea inside me and out  
I am a walnut tree in Gulhane Park  
an old walnut, knot by knot, shred by shred  
Neither you are aware of this, nor the police

I am a walnut tree in Gulhane Park  
My leaves are nimble, nimble like fish in water  
My leaves are sheer, sheer like a silk handkerchief  
pick, wipe, my rose, the tear from your eyes  
My leaves are my hands, I have one hundred thousand  
I touch you with one hundred thousand hands, I touch Istanbul  
My leaves are my eyes, I look in amazement  
I watch you with one hundred thousand eyes, I watch Istanbul  
Like one hundred thousand hearts, beat, beat my leaves

I am a walnut tree in Gulhane Park  
neither you are aware of this, nor the police

Nazim Hikmet

# Things I Didn'T Know I Loved

it's 1962 March 28th

I'm sitting by the window on the Prague-Berlin train

night is falling

I never knew I liked

night descending like a tired bird on a smoky wet plain

I don't like

comparing nightfall to a tired bird

I didn't know I loved the earth

can someone who hasn't worked the earth love it

I've never worked the earth

it must be my only Platonic love

and here I've loved rivers all this time

whether motionless like this they curl skirting the hills

European hills crowned with chateaus

or whether stretched out flat as far as the eye can see

I know you can't wash in the same river even once

I know the river will bring new lights you'll never see

I know we live slightly longer than a horse but not nearly as long as a crow

I know this has troubled people before

and will trouble those after me

I know all this has been said a thousand times before

and will be said after me

I didn't know I loved the sky

cloudy or clear

the blue vault Andrei studied on his back at Borodino

in prison I translated both volumes of War and Peace into Turkish

I hear voices

not from the blue vault but from the yard

the guards are beating someone again

I didn't know I loved trees

bare beeches near Moscow in Peredelkino

they come upon me in winter noble and modest

beeches are Russian the way poplars are Turkish

"the poplars of Izmir

losing their leaves. . .

they call me The Knife. . .

lover like a young tree. . .

I blow stately mansions sky-high"

in the Ilgaz woods in 1920 I tied an embroidered linen handkerchief  
to a pine bough for luck

I never knew I loved roads  
even the asphalt kind

Vera's behind the wheel we're driving from Moscow to the Crimea  
Koktebele

formerly "Goktepe; ili" in Turkish

the two of us inside a closed box

the world flows past on both sides distant and mute

I was never so close to anyone in my life

bandits stopped me on the red road between Bolu and Gerede;  
when I was eighteen

apart from my life I didn't have anything in the wagon they could take  
and at eighteen our lives are what we value least

I've written this somewhere before

wading through a dark muddy street I'm going to the shadow play  
Ramazan night

a paper lantern leading the way

maybe nothing like this ever happened

maybe I read it somewhere an eight-year-old boy  
going to the shadow play

Ramazan night in Istanbul holding his grandfather's hand

his grandfather has on a fez and is wearing the fur coat

with a sable collar over his robe

and there's a lantern in the servant's hand

and I can't contain myself for joy

flowers come to mind for some reason

poppies cactuses jonquils

in the jonquil garden in Kadikoy Istanbul I kissed Marika

fresh almonds on her breath

I was seventeen

my heart on a swing touched the sky

I didn't know I loved flowers

friends sent me three red carnations in prison

I just remembered the stars

I love them too

whether I'm floored watching them from below

or whether I'm flying at their side



I have some questions for the cosmonauts  
were the stars much bigger  
did they look like huge jewels on black velvet  
                                or apricots on orange  
did you feel proud to get closer to the stars  
I saw color photos of the cosmos in Ogonek magazine now don't  
be upset comrades but nonfigurative shall we say or abstract  
well some of them looked just like such paintings which is to  
say they were terribly figurative and concrete  
my heart was in my mouth looking at them  
they are our endless desire to grasp things  
seeing them I could even think of death and not feel at all sad  
I never knew I loved the cosmos

snow flashes in front of my eyes  
both heavy wet steady snow and the dry whirling kind  
I didn't know I liked snow

I never knew I loved the sun  
even when setting cherry-red as now  
in Istanbul too it sometimes sets in postcard colors  
but you aren't about to paint it that way  
I didn't know I loved the sea  
                                except the Sea of Azov  
or how much

I didn't know I loved clouds  
whether I'm under or up above them  
whether they look like giants or shaggy white beasts

moonlight the falsest the most languid the most petit-bourgeois  
strikes me  
I like it

I didn't know I liked rain  
whether it falls like a fine net or splatters against the glass my  
heart leaves me tangled up in a net or trapped inside a drop  
and takes off for uncharted countries I didn't know I loved  
rain but why did I suddenly discover all these passions sitting  
by the window on the Prague-Berlin train  
is it because I lit my sixth cigarette

one alone could kill me  
is it because I'm half dead from thinking about someone back in Moscow  
her hair straw-blond eyelashes blue

the train plunges on through the pitch-black night  
I never knew I liked the night pitch-black  
sparks fly from the engine  
I didn't know I loved sparks  
I didn't know I loved so many things and I had to wait until sixty  
to find it out sitting by the window on the Prague-Berlin train  
watching the world disappear as if on a journey of no return

19 April 1962  
Moscow

Trans. by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk (1993)

Nazim Hikmet

# Thinking Of You

Thinking of you is pretty, hopeful,  
It is like listening to the most beautiful song  
From the most beautiful voice on earth...  
But hope is not enough for me any more,  
I don't want to listen to songs any more,  
I want to sing.

Nazim Hikmet

# To Samet Vurgun

I finally made it to your city,  
but I was late, Samet,  
we couldn't get together:  
I was late by the space of death.  
I didn't want to hear your voice  
on tape, samet --  
I can't look at pictures of the dead  
without totally dying.

But the day will come  
when I'll totally separate you from yourself, Samet.  
You'll enter the world of respectable memories.  
And I'll lay flowers on your grave  
without tears in my eyes.

Then the day will come  
when what happened to you  
will happen to me, too, Samet.

Nazim Hikmet

# Today Is Sunday

Today is Sunday.  
For the first time they took me out into the sun today.  
And for the first time in my life I was aghast  
that the sky is so far away  
and so blue  
and so vast  
I stood there without a motion.  
Then I sat on the ground with respectful devotion  
leaning against the white wall.  
Who cares about the waves with which I yearn to roll  
Or about strife or freedom or my wife right now.  
The soil, the sun and me...  
I feel joyful and how.

Translated by Talat Sait Halman

Nazim Hikmet

# You

You are my enslavement and my freedom  
You are my flesh burning like a raw summer night  
You are my country  
You are the green silks in hazel eyes  
You are big, beautiful and triumphant  
And you are my sorrow that isn't felt  
the more I feel it.

Nazim Hikmet

# You Are My Drunkenness

You are my drunkenness...  
I did not sober up, as if I can do that;  
I don't want to anyway.  
I have a headache, my knees are full of scars  
I am in mud all around  
I struggle to walk towards your hesitant light.

Nazim Hikmet