



*Mayakovsky
& O'Hara*

Poems in order of appearance:

Conversation with Comrade Lenin

Vladimir Mayakovsky

Past One O'Clock...

Vladimir Mayakovsky

Mayakovsky

Frank O'Hara

Awhirl with events,
 packed with jobs one too many,
the day slowly sinks
 as the night shadows fall.
There are two in the room:
 I
 and Lenin-
a photograph
 on the whiteness of wall.

The stubble slides upward
 above his lip
as his mouth
 jerks open in speech.
 The tense
creases of brow
 hold thought
 in their grip,
immense brow
 matched by thought immense.
A forest of flags,
 raised-up hands thick as grass...
Thousands are marching
 beneath him...
 Transported,
alight with joy,
 I rise from my place,

eager to see him,
 hail him,
 report to him!
"Comrade Lenin,
 I report to you -
(not a dictate of office,
 the heart's prompting alone)

This hellish work
 that we're out to do
will be done
 and is already being done.
We feed and we clothe
 and give light to the needy,
the quotas
 for coal
 and for iron
 fulfill,
but there is
 any amount
 of bleeding
muck
 and rubbish
 around us still.

Without you,
there's many
have got out of hand,
all the sparring
and squabbling
does one in.

There's scum
in plenty
hounding our land,

outside the borders
and also
within.

Try to
count 'em
and
tab 'em -
it's no go,

there's all kinds,
and they're
thick as nettles:
kulaks,
red tapists,

and,
down the row,
drunkards,
sectarians,
lickspittles.
They strut around
proudly
as peacocks,
badges and fountain pens
studding their chests.
We'll lick the lot of 'em-
but
to lick 'em

is no easy job
at the very best.

On snow-covered lands
and on stubbly fields,
in smoky plants
and on factory sites,
with you in our hearts,

Comrade Lenin,
we build,
we think,
we breathe,
we live,
and we fight!"

Awhirl with events,
packed with jobs one too many,
the day slowly sinks
as the night shadows fall.
There are two in the room:
I
and Lenin -
a photograph
on the whiteness of wall.

Conversation with Comrade Lenin

Vladimir Mayakovsky

1929

source: marxists.org

Past one o'clock. You must have gone to bed.
The Milky Way streams silver through the night.
I'm in no hurry; with lightning telegrams
I have no cause to wake or trouble you.
And, as they say, the incident is closed.
Love's boat has smashed against the daily grind.
Now you and I are quits. Why bother then
To balance mutual sorrows, pains, and hurts.
Behold what quiet settles on the world.
Night wraps the sky in tribute from the stars.
In hours like these, one rises to address
The ages, history, and all creation.

Past One O'Clock...

Vladimir Mayakovsky

1930

Source: The Bedbug and selected poetry,
translated by Max Hayward and
George Reavey. Meridian Books,
New York, 1960; via marxists.org

Transcribed: by Mitch Abidor.

This poem was found among Mayakovsky's papers after his suicide on April 14, 1930. He had used the middle section, with slight changes, as an epilogue to his suicide note.

1

My heart's aflutter!

I am standing in the bath tub

crying. Mother, mother

who am I? If he

will just come back once

and kiss me on the face

his coarse hair brush

my temple, it's throbbing!

then I can put on my clothes

I guess, and walk the streets.

2

I love you. I love you,

but I'm turning to my verses

and my heart is closing

like a fist.

Words! be

sick as I am sick, swoon,

roll back your eyes, a pool,

and I'll stare down

at my wounded beauty

which at best is only a talent

for poetry.

Cannot please, cannot charm or win

what a poet!

and the clear water is thick

with bloody blows on its head.

I embrace a cloud,

but when I soared

it rained.

3

That's funny! there's blood on my chest

oh yes, I've been carrying bricks

what a funny place to rupture!

and now it is raining on the ailanthus

as I step out onto the window ledge

the tracks below me are smoky and

glistening with a passion for running

I leap into the leaves, green like the sea

4

Now I am quietly waiting for

the catastrophe of my personality

to seem beautiful again,

and interesting, and modern.

The country is grey and
brown and white in trees,
snows and skies of laughter
always diminishing, less funny
not just darker, not just grey.

It may be the coldest day of
the year, what does he think of
that? I mean, what do I? And if I do,
perhaps I am myself again.

Mayakovsky

Frank O'Hara

1957

Source: *Meditations in an Emergency*
(Grove/Atlantic Inc., 1996)

The country is grey and
brown and white in trees,
snows and skies of laughter
always diminishing, less funny
not just darker, not just grey.

It may be the coldest day of
A different account of Mayakovsky's suicide
note is provided by marxists.org, and reads as:

that? I mean, what do I? And if I do,
perhaps I on myself again.

Do not blame anyone for my death and please do
not gossip. The deceased terribly dislike this
sort of thing. Mamma, sisters and comrades,
forgive me – this is not a way out (I do not
recommend it to others), but I have none other.
Lily – love me...Comrades of VAPP [the all-union
organization of RAPP] – do not think me
weak-spirited. Seriously – there was nothing
else I could do. Greetings.

Mayakovsky

Frank O'Hara

1957

Source: Meditations in an Emergency
(Grove/Atlantic Inc., 1996)

Claire
& Jenry
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