

# At the Top of My voice

by Vladimir Mayakovsky

My most respected  
    comrades of posterity!  
Rummaging among  
    these days'  
        petrified crap,  
exploring the twilight of our times,  
you,  
    possibly,  
        will inquire about me too.  
And, possibly, your scholars  
        will declare,  
with their erudition overwhelming  
        a swarm of problems;  
once there lived  
        a certain champion of boiled water,  
and inveterate enemy of raw water.  
Professor,  
    take off your bicycle glasses!  
I myself will expound  
        those times  
                and myself.  
I, a latrine cleaner  
        and water carrier,  
by the revolution  
        mobilized and drafted,  
went off to the front  
        from the aristocratic gardens  
of poetry -  
    the capricious wench  
She planted a delicious garden,  
the daughter,  
    cottage,  
        pond  
                and meadow.  
Myself a garden I did plant,  
myself with water sprinkled it.  
some pour their verse from water cans;  
others spit water  
        from their mouth -  
the curly Macks,  
        the clever jacks -  
but what the hell's it all about!  
There's no damming al this up -  
beneath the walls they mandoline:  
"Tara-tina, tara-tine,  
tw-a-n-g..."  
It's no great honor, then,  
        for my monuments  
to rise from such roses  
above the public squares,  
        where consumption coughs,  
where whores, hooligans and syphilis

walk.

Agitprop

sticks

in my teeth too,

and I'd rather

compose

romances for you -

more profit in it

and more charm.

But I

subdued

myself,

setting my heel

on the throat

of my own song.

Listen,

comrades of posterity,

to the agitator

the rabble-rouser.

Stifling

the torrents of poetry,

I'll skip

the volumes of lyrics;

as one alive,

I'll address the living.

I'll join you

in the far communist future,

I who am

no Esenin super-hero.

My verse will reach you

across the peaks of ages,

over the heads

of governments and poets.

My verse

will reach you

not as an arrow

in a cupid-lyred chase,

not as worn penny

Reaches a numismatist,

not as the light of dead stars reaches you.

My verse

by labor

will break the mountain chain of years,

and will present itself

ponderous,

crude,

tangible,

as an aqueduct,

by slaves of Rome

constructed,

enters into our days.

When in mounds of books,

where verse lies buried,

you discover by chance the iron filings of lines,

touch them

with respect,  
as you would  
some antique  
yet awesome weapon.  
It's no habit of mine  
to caress  
the ear  
with words;  
a maiden's ear  
curly-ringed  
will not crimson  
when flicked by smut.  
In parade deploying  
the armies of my pages,  
I shall inspect  
the regiments in line.  
Heavy as lead,  
my verses at attention stand,  
ready for death  
and for immortal fame.  
The poems are rigid,  
pressing muzzle  
to muzzle their gaping  
pointed titles.  
The favorite  
of all the armed forces  
the cavalry of witticisms  
ready  
to launch a wild hallooing charge,  
reins its chargers still,  
raising  
the pointed lances of the rhymes.  
and all  
these troops armed to the teeth,  
which have flashed by  
victoriously for twenty years,  
all these,  
to their very last page,  
I present to you,  
the planet's proletarian.  
The enemy  
of the massed working class  
is my enemy too  
inveterate and of long standing.  
Years of trial  
and days of hunger  
ordered us  
to march  
under the red flag.  
We opened  
each volume  
of Marx  
as we would open  
the shutters  
in our own house;



let us  
march faster,  
march  
faster through what's left  
of the five-year plan.  
My verse  
has brought me  
no rubles to spare:  
no craftsmen have made  
mahogany chairs for my house.  
In all conscience,  
I need nothing  
except  
a freshly laundered shirt.  
When I appear  
before the CCC  
of the coming  
bright years,  
by way of my Bolshevik party card,  
I'll raise  
above the heads  
of a gang of self-seeking  
poets and rogues,  
all the hundred volumes  
of my  
communist-committed books.