

Vladimir Mayakovsky

The Brooklyn Bridge

Don't act coolish,
comrade Coolidge!
Revel –
 my praise is merited!
Redder than our flag
 redde[n] on behalf
of your very much U. S.
 of
America.

As monks – to their cells,
 with plainness and purity,
to their church – believers,
 deranged and bewitched,
thus,
 amid thickening evening obscurity,
humbled
 I come
 to the Brooklyn
 Bridge.

As conquerors march
 through a fallen
 fortress,
with cannons tall – no giraffe can reach,
thus glory-besotted,
 alive self-importance,
I proudly
 climb
 on the Brooklyn
 Bridge.

As, love-struck,
 the eyes of a silly artist
devour a Madonna
 inch by inch,
thus mine, from the heights
 of this nightly stardust
look at New York
 through the Brooklyn
 Bridge.

The City, so muggy
in midday hours,
forgets
to feel ponderous and skyscrapery,
and only the lonely
souls
of towers
shine through their windows'
transparent drapery.

Here tickles some faintly discernible din.
And only because of this ticklish
clinking,
you know – locomotives are rattling akin
to dinnerware
when
put away after cleaning.

And then, when the breeze
picks up
a little,
and sailboats begin, by the channel's
middleline,
to back-and-forth
like a swarm of beetles,
size-wise
their masts
from the bridge
look needle-like.

I'm proud of this mile
of steel
ambition,
It brings alive
what I'm
envisioning:
not fashions – constructions
are the mission,
of nuts and bolts
the steel-clad
reasoning.

If
the apocalypse
finally happens –
chaos transforms
the planet to trash,
and only this bridge,
be it badly misshapen,
stays hovering
over the doomsday
ash,
then,
just the way
Mesozoic lizards
bone after bone
gave away
their mystery,
thus
from this bridge
future science
wizards
could reconstruct
all our present
history.

They'll say:
“These paws of steel
suggest that
here seas and prairies
were joined together,
Europe from here
aspired
westward,
in passing
scattering
Indian feathers.”

“These ribs formed an engine.
If
that hadn't
been used,
the task would be too colossal –
to hold by the neck,
one hand on Manhattan,
the other in Brooklyn,
and pull them closer.”

“With threads
of electrical circuits
ready
(we see –
it is
the post-steam
era)
here people
already
could rap
by radio,
here people
already
took off
by aero.”
“Here life was
for some –
delight unalloyed,
for others –
a lingering hungry
scream.
From here
the unemployed
jumped headfirst
into the stream.”

“And picturing further:
in transit from Moscow –
(these cables – they string
the entire Universe)
we figure –
right here
stood V.
Mayakovsky,
he stood
and through syllables
threaded
verse.”
I look,
as Eskimos stare at a train,
dig in,
like ticks in a brow.
This
Brooklyn Bridge is,
simple and plain,
a..
wow!