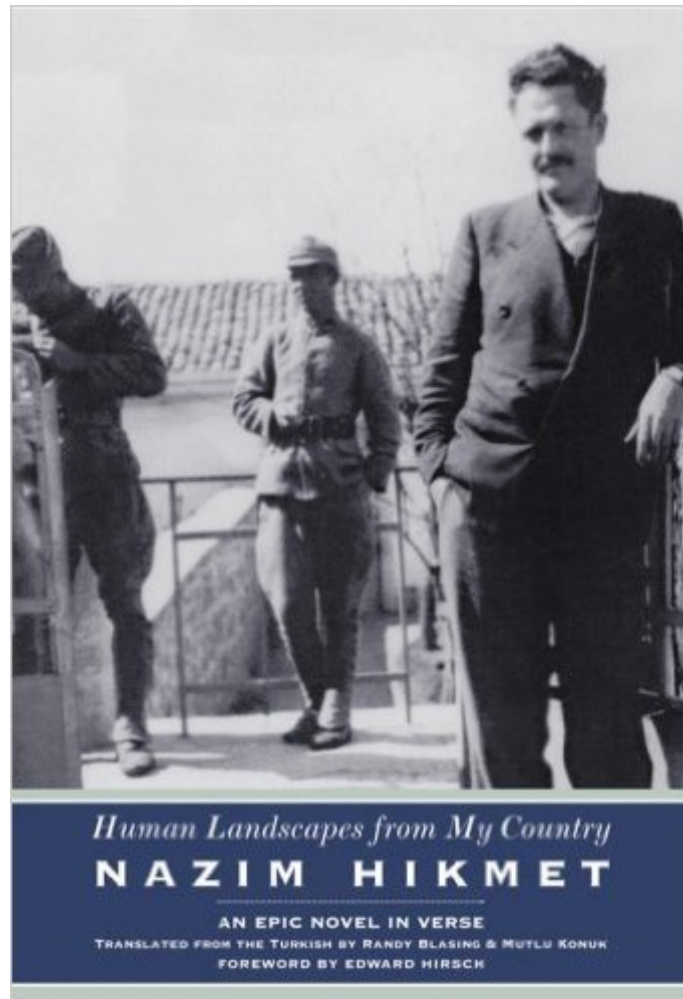


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Human Landscapes From My Country: An Epic Novel In Verse (Karen And Michael Braziller Books)



Synopsis

The complete English translation of Nazim Hikmet's epic masterwork. Written during the Second World War while Hikmet was serving a thirteen-year sentence as a political prisoner, his verse-novel uses cinematic techniques to tell the story of the emergence of secular, modern Turkey by focusing on the always-entertaining stories of sundry characters from all walks of life. As his vignettes flash before our eyes at movie-like speed, it becomes clear he is also telling the turbulent story of the twentieth century itself and the ongoing struggle between tradition, which trusts in God, and modernity, which entrusts the world to human hands.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Writing poetic prose and prosaic poetry and allowing the reader to discover the joy of reading such writing is the sign of a good writer. The ability to load humble every day words with so much meaning and emotion is the sign of an exceptional writer. The ability to do this for a long epic poem without losing the interest and attention of the reader is the sign of a great writer. Usually only the names of good poems are remembered or some stanzas, a line or two, or four, an interesting name like Madame Sosostiris, or sounds that tintinnabulate, a general meaning or such. Here we remember a gamut of characters, normal, standard, everyday people who come to mind and disappear again to be remembered once more on another day of introspection or remembrance or association. They are not that special, their names are not strange or funny. They board a train,

travel and leave. They remember, reminisce, talk, complain, brag, lie, cry like all people do. But they are sometimes you and sometimes others that you already know although the time is 1941 and you were possibly not even born then. It has been so short since Nazim Hikmet wrote his epic, just as it has been very short since the tragedies of Aeschylus were written or the comedies of Aristophanes, or the plays and sonnets of Shakespeare. Time stands still for the common man as it does for kings and cabbages. But Nazim Hikmet's train continues on its never ending journey and will do so as long as a single copy of this book remains for someone to read. And a special note of thanks for the translators. I have read it in both Turkish and English and must say that I enjoyed it equally. They have done a great job.

Are you ready for a 465 page poem? So much are readers seemingly put off by poetry that most of what you get these days are collections of short poems in thin books that cost more than a novel and have spines so thin you can barely read the title. Actually, this English translation of Turkey's world writer, Nazim Hikmet, written in free verse splayed across the page like Naked nude, is no more a challenging read than a novel of the same length. Hikmet wrote this poem while in prison, where he was tossed after it was learned that Turkish soldiers were reciting his poems. You get a panoramic look of Turkey from the 1880's up to World War II, and a picture of humanity that is universal. The structure of this epic novel in verse is a train ride across Turkey with passengers telling their stories. Some of the passengers are prisoners being transferred. The multitude of stories told have an earthiness a bit like Chaucer's epic, the Canterbury tales, and the structure of a group of people traveling and telling stories is the same. War is a major subject, as with Homer and Virgil. In Hikmet you hear the stories of both the rich and the poor. An American friend of mine who lives in Turkey tells me he can discuss poetry with waiters in a restaurant. Poetry is still important to that culture. You get that sense reading Hikmet. Unlike Pound's unfinished Cantos, which he could never get to cohere and which tend to be elitist, Hikmet's epic lives in the salt of the earth.

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