Mayakovsky Street

After A Cloud in Trousers

It happened. It happened in Odessa. 
I came to Mayakovsky Street 
by foot 
train 
and foot again, 
the scholar with no car – what a joke –
but a blue poem book, which drives as well. 
A man shook my arm, 
torturing an ugly dog on a leash 
he told me 
Mayakovsky Street was dead, 
swapped for a hot-air politician I knew and disliked 
(the name rang strange out there.)
Whatever. 
Who cares? 
Nothing lost, just shrubs and potholes, 
a road eating itself. 
Gorky once asked how you 
yelled at the sunrise each day. 
I haven’t the fortitude for anger. 
Your poems are the sun and yell together. 
Mine beg a little rain if they are lucky; 
my temperament the same, 
not a woman, a cloud in skirts. I cannot even exclaim. 
And if I did, there are bigger things: 
war, illness, novels, men. 
Love, too, but I cannot love a street – 
a symbol is still an object, it is the meaning people desire. 
Mayakovsky! 
Listen, I will write you a poem.