Afternoon Suicide
For Vladimir Mayakovsky

“... who would fardels bear to grunt and sweat under a weary life”
Hamlet, William Shakespeare, Act III, Scene i

Scrambling up from one of the Muses' inkwells
You are an ink-devil,
No poet.

Parnassus changes you,
Inutterably.

You drink in through your pores
And grow five drunken feet.
You become an alembic
And distill the iambic.
You become a nightmare
That threatens poets
By telling them
That the loss of perfect words
Is perpetual.
You feel like a scoundrel with wings,
Cursed
To turn pain into pantomime
Across
The yellow cobbles of pages.

An idea lodges like a bullet
In the skull
That cannot kill
The soft greyness of memory.
Will the bullet bloom
Like the dark heart of a sunflower?
You no longer fear everything,
Only the ubiquity of nothing.

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Beyond the timid fringe,
Of words
And ink
And blood-salt,
Will you sing with death,
As only your life can?

Debasish Lahiri