HAVEPOETRY.COM

SABYASACHI NAG

CATASTROPHE THAT NEARLY BROUGHT DOWN A PLANE

After late-night Li Bo,
on a plane to Houston, out of sheer intumescence
I begin unravelling a sickness bag—
starting with the wired throat,
then the pleated sides, then bottom.
My finger trapezing through the waxed paper
feels like a tall-masted skiff – almost Odysseus
slicing Lake Ontario: placid like an eye
that has seen without knowing –
seen earth before there was blood,
before the peach blossoms, before words –
midsummer sky like cut nectarine –
before butterflies; moon rivers; temple bells.
Meanwhile, in the seat behind me
someone’s talking out loud.
His language of gestures and force – lost
on everyone, like some forgotten folklore.
Bloodshot, stubble-faced, his unbuttoned shirt
resting on his chest in reverse
like a deflated child suckling a mother's hairy teat.
He tamps down the child and talks
to the young girl beside him,
to the men in front of him.
The girl is anxious, can't understand a thing.
She has nowhere to go.
Hasn't heard anyone talk like this before.
Not rant, not even sermon, just talk – modulated
like rain gurgling down tin eaves – incessant,
torrential rain, pointing to a whole universe
outside sealed plastic windows.
Folks that have spent their entire lives looking away
have to stretch their necks hard, looking for him –
the man who won't stop talking.
Anxious attendants scurry up and down the aisle
begging the man to stop.
Stop. Stop. Stop.
Facing the girl, he ignores them all, as though
he has been alone under the moon, drinking,

after being forced to shut up too long.