

Flight to Finland – Bob Beagrie

The sun, out of the window of the plane, sets
my numb nerves atingle with fire as it sinks

into a sea of cloud 36500 feet above the Baltic
turning the vapour-scape into molten undulations

throbbing with barely contained eruption; a detail
from John Martin's Sodom & Gomorrah, the fire-eye

burning through empty space of the stratosphere,
my cheek blushing, my upheld fingers stained red;

yesterday a young girl walking past the foot
of the staircase in The Ship Inn, Saltburn, casually

announced, "There's a ghost at the top of them stair,"
and I resisted the urge to glance up at the apparition,

almost saying "Yes, and one at the bottom too,"
and one speaking, and writing now, and another reading

and the sun floating on the crust of cloud is already
eight minutes dead - an image of Lemminkainen

floundering into the turmoil of the black river
to be torn apart by all of the ferocity that lies

beneath the surface tension:

the political sharks, pike and piranha
the birthing cries, the weeping trees
the dancing ripples, the burning bridges
of clasped hands, monuments to unbridled
ambition, the bridges made from sweat
the houses of faith and their opposite
(which is also faith), the bridges fashioned
from sighs and shrugs, the rope bridges
full of shall-knots running over the heads
of crocs with their grins ready to strip
flesh and light from bone, take on
digest and transform the energy

and within this time of suspension in thinned air
as darkness comes on and the sun's searing glare

becomes a blood stain on the cloud-lake's sloughed skin
I close my eyes to ask, what marvels shall we make of this?

and wait for the pilot to announce the beginning
of our descent into the gravity of our worldly bodies.