Flying Lesson

By Dolores Hayden


*Humilis*, a small cloud, 
*cumulus humilis*, a fine day to fly.

*Incus*, the anvil, stay grounded. 
*Nimbus*, rain, be careful, 

don’t take off near *nimbostratus*, 
a shapeless layer 

of rain, hail, ice, or snow. 
Ice weighs on the blades of your propeller, 

weighs on the entering edge of your wings. 
Read a cloud, 

decode it, 
a dense, chilly mass 

can shift, flood with light. 
Watch for clouds closing under you, 

the sky opens in a breath, 
shuts in a heartbeat.

Source: *Poetry* (April 2014)