Flying Lesson

By Dolores Hayden

Focus on the shapes. Cirrus, a curl, stratus, a layer, cumulus, a heap.

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)