ALTITUDES CHANGE ATTITUDES

When we first see them

we scan quickly, up,

so that the heart not

miss, so that they be,

and not the mushroom

cloud. Air traffic skirts

thunderheads, until

hemmed in by three

megacephalic white

risers we yield, enter

the empire of clouds.

Here small wisps,

condensates reign,

in calm belied

by the plane's bob.

We know air is

a fluid, but who

is skipping us across

this surface? At times

like these, it's soothing

to think of Avogadro's

number of molecules

colliding, set on

a random jig by heat

and the absence of it

exchanged where cliffs

and sea chance to meet.

Sucked about by lows,

whirling — nothing

definite, aimed at us

could come from such

sweet and airy chaos?

Sure enough — a break,

(how nice now to fly)

a glimpse of a bed-

scape for outsize

gods, flash-frozen

billows, a nesting

peace that might come

from falling, unarrested.

Now the fleece moves,

rushes up. Wings slice

into gray, again. The

clouds have kept the sun

for their own purposes. We

drop, precipitously.

In the empire of clouds

the dark one rains.