

he'd croon to the barmaids
along our long route home

forgetting, even as he said it
that all that lovely meat

was spoiling in the car.
But I remembered. I knew

the trouble we were in.
I could already see us

opening the bloody packages—
our poor brains, our testicles

smelling up the whole kitchen
again, and in the sorry face

of all my father's promises
to come home early, sober

a fine example for his son
a good husband for a change

one of those smart guys
who knew all about meat.

The Age of Reason

Once, my father got invited
by an almost perfect stranger

a four hundred pound alcoholic
who bought the drinks all day

to go really flying sometime
sightseeing in his Piper Cub

and my father said *perfect!*
Tomorrow was my birthday

I'd be seven years old, a chip
off the old daredevil himself

and we'd love to go flying.
We'd even bring a case of beer.

My father weighed two-fifty
two-seventy-five in those days

the beer weighed something
the ice, the cooler. I weighed

practically nothing: forty-five
maybe fifty pounds at the most—

just enough to make me nervous.
Where were the parachutes? Who

was this guy? Then suddenly
there we were, lumbering

down a bumpy, too short runway
and headed for a fence . . .

Holy Shit! my father shouts
and that's it, all we need

by way of the miraculous
to lift us in a twinkling

over everything—fence, trees
and powerline. What a birthday!

We were really flying now . . .
We were probably high enough

to have another beer in fact,
high enough to see Belle Isle

the Waterworks, Packard's
and the Chrysler plant.

We could even see our own
bug-sized house down there

our own backyard, smaller
than a chewed down thumbnail.

We wondered if my mother
was taking down the laundry

and if she'd wave . . . Lightning
trembled in the thunderheads

above Belle Isle. Altitude:
2500, air speed: one-twenty

but the fuel gauge I noticed
quivered right on empty . . .

I'd reached the age of reason.
Our pilot lit a big cigar.