Three of us in the back and me stuck in the middle
with only the windshield to look out of, jutting
my head like a prow over the front seat.
Dad was telling us how Orville and Wilbur Wright
launched the first plane flight by Kitty Hawk,
a town we drove through, headed for Cape Hatteras.
I was expecting a big spread thing like what Mom
wore to parties over a long dress, caught at the neck,
but it was just land sticking out into the ocean
as if we had missed the cape somehow, so this was the head
and the sea was the hat. For two weeks I heard
gulls calling Here kitty, kitty, curving above us,
and thought they were hawks. Words were something
tangible, connected with the world, and yet not.
Waves lifted us up, as if gravity were reversed of a sudden
then broke, bruising us, filling our mouths and suits
with sand, teaching us to mistrust. We made believe
we were those air-bound boys who grew up by the beach
with birds always teasing them from places they couldn’t
reach. Kitty Hawk. How was the name like the breakers, always
pursuing, escaping? I learned words are not garments
that fit, but stretch to cover nakedness. Cape Hat-
teras: where the earth finally capsizes, consonants
posing around vowels dispose themselves into vows
that crash against a vague and immense rock,
on which thoughts are seagulls, shrieking and searching
for stuff.