



PROJECT MUSE®

Hammered Dulcimer

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THE DIRECTION OF SHADOW

At night, the arrows of our fortune
point up and point down.
Black and inelastic,
slanted but not like sunlight,
taut as a heron's foot
or a string about to break
are the arrows of the fortune
we do not create.

The arrows of our fortune
cannot be touched, except
when a hand interrupts
their soft black filaments
on the ground, and the skin's
color, brushed with absence,
suddenly dims—

Magnificent
are the arrows of our fortune
when the shadows of huge trees,
slender, pillared, excellent,
form them. Like the doorway
of a new religion
they open something
but what?

To the arrows of our fortune
something sometimes happens:
the force of the arrow
slings past its shadow
which drops
on the grass, on the ground,
heavy as a man.

What is left behind,
what flaps in the wind,
is not it at all—
not the vibrant quiver,

nor the impenetrable mark,
nor the piercing matter.

The man falls on the grass.
His shadow joins him.
The goal dissolves in space.
A force flies through the universe,
winged in flame.
It is a game
where nothing wins
and everything of course is lost.