



PROJECT MUSE®

Hammered Dulcimer

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MANNERS, 1977

My grandmother took me for a ride
in her brand new turquoise glide
of a car, with doors for fins.

We sank in the fabulous plush,
soft leather like family skin,
the windows opening at will.

Wish had become mechanical.
My grandmother steered the way
through complicated streets,

through the old, Southern sights.
We moved in clouds of blue:
hot blue, Amazon River blue.

We were partners in luxury.
The sidewalks jumped, then disappeared.
Birds sprang in various directions.

We were calm. We didn't care.
There were tiny, tree-lined roads,
and streets of rowdy schoolchildren.

We passed the hospital, the pharmacy,
the house behind the highest fence,
another house we'd lived in once,

its same old willow weeping.
My grandmother had silver hair
that dazzled anyone who noticed.

She'd worked for years at duty.
The Lincoln suited her slow beauty.
We passed, serenely,

our favorite, blooming neighborhoods,
vast mansions we would never enter
—that is, would never see together.

The sun was certain; the sky one view.
No news of what lay just ahead.
Or was it miles and miles of pleasure
as we stretched our azure limbs?
Only my dazzling grandmother
could make the whole town take us in.
She taught me then (and many
years of colors later)
what distinctive manners meant.