



PROJECT MUSE®

Hammered Dulcimer

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ON A WORM DESCENDING A THREAD

This gray light is full of invention,
of the rustling of feathers and hues.
There are voices no language can sing.

The sun dips its face in the dark,
in the alternate substance, the mirror.
It is listening. It listens to water

and it follows that sound to the sea
where the moon waits, the delicate daughter,
earth's eldest, who sprang out of grief

and flew off through the torn, broken trees,
past the ferns, past the sisterly branches,
past the swan's neck, the forest of eyes
and of wounds, and adjusted her grace
to a height, to a distance, where sorrow
can turn from its body, not touch.

Her departure has scattered a shell
in the sea, has inflected the deep
murk of absence with silvery scales

that will brush an oiled brethren all night.
We are light, we are light, dream the fish
as the water rings out and away.

*Since the darkness will flood into me,
I will rise and give birth to myself.
Oh what veils I'll remove as I go!*

thinks the moon. She has thrown off her grief
and is able to shine on most nights,
then returns to a river of doubt.

Those below her must travel with care.
They must follow their stream to the end.
They must follow the stream of their listening . . .

and the grey light is full of invention,
and the soul rides the question, its string
in the musical night. The soul rides
on a frail and invisible thread
or a sound. *How it twists in the air!*
laughs the moon, looking pale, looking wan.