



PROJECT MUSE®

Hammered Dulcimer

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IN THE ABSTRACT

Slowly, slowly, slowly,
a red hawk circles the blue sky.
“It is a meaning,”

I could say, or “It is matter,
the *form*.” But that would be
disingenuous.

How a word
soars from us, leaving
the mind open, the mouth empty.

Or, alternately, how it stabs at
the small distinctions
on land, conquering

deep untidiness
shallowly. So my guess,
placid and many-hued,

doubles the blue
distance, which is almost all
slate.

So it falls.
If meaning were flight,
would it be so perfectly honed,
would it be such an instrument
of departure,
such a private chariot
of feather and air?
And what would that meaning
find, the one

we can't touch, clear and sure
of its path?
How it would swath

through the blue shell
of absence, not even a cry
could reach, not even a cry
on the highest of hills . . .
Oh well. If I
am not careful, the meaning's
lost. Maybe
it is what appears to be
most vulnerable
to loss: a word
and its history, its freight,
the wing that lifts
our eyes to see beyond sight.