**I Learn to Play the Mountain Dulcimer Beside a Hospital Bed**

*with italics from David Wagoner*

Alena Coleman

There was never a time

to cull myself like there is now,

yet mouth clinches to clamor:

You can’t change the world,

but you can bite it.

I want to leave teethmarks

everywhere, hold mouth open

until the snap, breathe glass

through the nose, feel sand melt

in lungs choleric strong.

I am good for biting.

Then sweetly this, a hutch of eyewater

bubbles and fades away. I can roar

unholy in this silence, but the hymns

reel me back—bone into bone,

chord into chord.

The drum-tinted rage circles me,

like bees over dried baby’s-breath,

husk over husk.

My thighs fill with sound.

All body resonates.

In this, I know, I could carve

a life: not lightning, not fire,

but crickets. carnations. crinoline.

Fingers delve into heart-spot

so thumb-pressed, love-corrupted

it no longer aches:

*wherever you are is called here,*

yet still a truth: I move my mind

out of triage and into folksong.