Marsh Hawk

At Anahuac and again at Atwater National Wildlife Refuges
Searching for my spirit
As the wind blows across the prairie grasses.

The light hits the tops of the brown grasses and amplifies
The color just a certain way that tells me it is winter,
That it is the time of retreat, of shelter, of refuge,
Cold weather trying to keep me from the outdoors
That I love and that I will not abandon
During the short days in the time of the remote sun.

The hawk flies low over the grasses,
Eyes fixed for any movement indicating food,
Wings caressing the air, floating in motion,
Coaxing buoyancy from the nothingness,
Then altering its feathers and crashing down
And missing the now-fleeing field mouse.

The marsh hawk speaks to me
Of the timelessness of nature,
Of the absence of clocks,
Of the absence of records,
Representing constancy,
Reminding me of when I was a boy who first saw
The low-flying hawk with the white-banded tail
In the rice fields of Gueydan, Louisiana,
Where I once saw the sky covered
From east to west and north to south with ducks,
A hawk that today talks to my spiritual essence
In a language that I understand but cannot explain,
My spiritual-self contacted, resurrected and revitalized
By stopping to watch the marsh hawk flying over
The golden prairie grasses in the winter.