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## Hammered Dulcimer

Lisa Williams

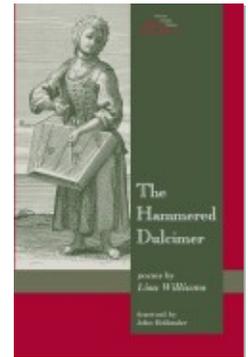
Published by Utah State University Press

Williams, Lisa.

Hammered Dulcimer.

Logan: Utah State University Press, 1998.

Project MUSE., <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



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<https://muse.jhu.edu/book/9345>

## INTERRUPTION OF FLIGHT

The woman with no feet sits on the porch.  
Before her, on the new-mown lawn,  
her son polishes his motorcycle  
until its chrome facets gleam  
under the sun, display a world  
playing on surfaces, things shining along  
and across, their parameters warped,  
motions churning and strange. The tall trees  
fringe space, fringe the blue  
with its frills of white mist,  
its patched lace. The old woman  
watches over the humming engine  
while her son revs it up,  
dark roar in our ears full of wind.  
The space around shapes  
is of interest, the space between leaves  
imprecise, planes of pale air notched  
by the green, a geometry raised,  
what might be an angle  
interrupted by branches grown past  
*plain*. The woman's legs jut out:  
one longer, cut off below the knee,  
the other lost mid-thigh. And above,  
the air writhes with birds, the sky's alive  
with flying into, flying through.  
Robins, dark robins, and sparrows,  
like strong priests, loop together  
the light between edges,  
gathering sense, making of the jaggedness  
something defined only by feeling.  
Or the crowd of the self's lifting off,  
carrying an image it believes  
is immense. Now the woman  
with feet made of air, with no speech,  
is being helped out of a car.

(When did she disappear?)  
“Lean forward. *Lean forward,*” the son orders.  
(I was watching the birds.)  
“*Push yourself out! Push yourself out!*”  
And the world above words, the real sky  
trailed by robins, by two crows  
and by fat pigeons scuttling  
the attic, feathering the heart’s box.  
One particular tree across the street  
from the woman with no feet  
stands in front of me. In the tree’s  
knotted limb is a hole, and in that waits  
an additional hunger  
deepening. Sparrows dart  
in and out of the hole in the limb  
where the restless chicks wait  
with black throats. The parents  
are solicitous, swooping down  
every few minutes. They will not stop  
so much emptiness, or the young naked song,  
song so sure of the spirit’s  
primacy, of the terrible wish.  
“*Good job. That makes it easier on everyone.*”  
Now the brusque son has placed his mother  
in a wheelchair, pushed her back to the porch  
where she’ll sit and observe  
the sun’s anger increase,  
the mechanical fruit. And her feet made of air  
have flown off with my heart  
like the birds who are priests.  
May we scatter in peace.