



PROJECT MUSE®

Hammered Dulcimer

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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.