



PROJECT MUSE®

Hammered Dulcimer

Lisa Williams

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ON THE NATURE OF BEAUTY

There are so many edges to things:
this lamp, this wall, this table.
Tonight, even a question
has clean dimensions. Outside, sounds rise
through aisles of grass,
ridges of bark, larva, wings.
There are so many edges to things;
for instance, the tablet of dusk
has been broken into pieces
by darkening trees
or whittled, maybe, by an old artiste
sitting on his porch in the sky.
Who is in love with wholes,
with the blurred manteau
of evening, eternally floating down
over every brittle figure,
turning them into the ground?
Who wouldn't rather create a figure,
regal, discontinuous,
surreal and extraneous,
but as essential to the sky
as the eye is?
On land, there are so many edges,
we have to hold on to them
dearly, they become our anthem,
what we run our tongues over,
what we run our hands over,
the bodies we touch,
the lines we engage,
even the loves we leave behind
to move onto the hard, lonely stage
we are always on the verge of.
We do not really want to be saved
from the shortcomings
of hands. We do not want the whole,
serene, mellifluous, unscaled,

though we may strive to get a look at it.
So when we find the beautiful,
whatever it may mean,
however it is changing,
we feel the presence of something
(maybe it is wings)
sprouting, prickling, burning,
giving us the edges again
of our own limited range,
spurring the fenced-in being
—when we lay eyes on it,
the beautiful,
the thing that stops our heart,
the act that seems worth a good try,
and it is, even for a minute,
that being ready to fly.