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## Hammered Dulcimer

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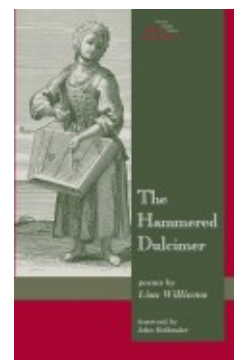
Published by Utah State University Press

Williams, Lisa.

Hammered Dulcimer.

Utah State University Press, 1998.

Project MUSE.[muse.jhu.edu/book/9345](https://muse.jhu.edu/book/9345).



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## ROMANTIC RELIEF

The trees look like women in beautiful dresses,  
the blue sky their background of cloudy excesses.

*To be all alone in a difficult world*

*is not what we're fearing.* They dangle their tresses  
as if they were women with answers, not guesses.

*To be all alone in the world isn't hard.*

These plunges of feeling, these lithe, stubborn branches  
of brown and bright green, these decorative phrases  
that seem like a frivolous dance in the mind . . .

*We know how to be with ourselves in the world*

say the women. They move to an army of breezes.

Who cares if there's not a whole army of words,

strong soldiers, to take the slim trees in their arms  
and lavish their bodies with verbal caresses  
until they are calm? Who cares if a world

where the soldiers, the women, the phrases are held,  
isn't real? *We stay with ourselves and are charmed.*

The trees are grown women and innocent guesses

and words in the air and abstractions and bards  
of some deeply historical verse in the heart.

The women are laughing. The branches grow firm,  
the green leaves transgressive. *We all fall apart.*