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## Hammered Dulcimer

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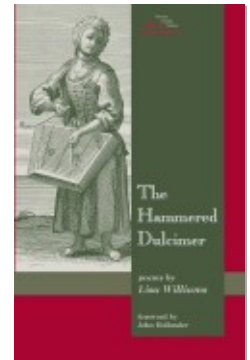
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AFTER A LINE OF PLATO

I

In the city that shall be perfect,  
in the city of intelligence  
where thinking reigns  
and desire is at rest  
and what happens happens  
because the self wills it  
to be so, you are reading.  
I am almost asleep.  
The sun slants  
on your belly, over your limbs.  
I am watching it find circumstance.  
I am wondering how fast, how fast,  
this abstract energy goes.  
Outside, children's shrieks  
mix with birdsong and men's saws  
and feet back and forth. I am trying  
to rise in this cavern of sound  
as if with a terrible weight.  
The sun swings around  
our flesh, armed and glorious,  
a procession of ages,  
a procession of myth.  
If it is true that the clichés follow us  
because they have something to say  
then this crow on a giant oak tree  
makes a very important point.  
It croaks a series of harsh notes:  
*One, two, three.*  
About our mortality, maybe.  
*One, two, three.*

Or the force of the mind  
when it lands on the tree of the body  
and believes it owns everything.

*One, two, three.*

When Satan entered the garden,  
he chose a bird

as his initial enchantment, his primary matter,  
its black feathers flecked  
with iridescence,

all the colors of the garden  
playing over its sheen.

He found the highest tree

to peruse his newfound paradise from  
and stayed there a very long time  
pondering what to begin.

It must have been spring.

The fruits of his provocation  
hanging down. The blunt sounds

of animals in the shadows,  
fleshly things. A man and a woman  
asleep, her dreaming

of difference.

This is the place  
where what I am

and what I would like to be  
opens its wings . . .

Today is Saturday. The tuliptrees'

pale yellow-greens  
bloom unfinished, the fringed palms  
of the maple unravel,

tiny, red-veined. Pater says  
"the seemingly new is old also"  
and "mere matter alone

is nothing.” Our crow doesn’t know this  
as he sends out his song  
to a distance that constantly  
takes it. He’s the detail  
unable to see  
past its beak. But the devil in us  
knows how surely we reside  
at the periphery, how foolish  
is all speech.

## II

And this is what the world is.  
Primarily music. Not meaning  
but action and form. Not meaning.  
In the city of perpetual motion,  
in the city that *will* be enough,  
the matter itself  
has arrived.  
It lands in the midst of our innocence.  
It lands with its own kind of innocence,  
a hard fact beneath it,  
the soft air around.  
Both the body of stillness  
and the body of flight,  
poised on a branch  
no soul could reach,  
with the voice that is not prettiest,  
it will sing,  
all the colors of the garden  
playing over its wings,  
while the adequate, more than adequate  
promise hangs—

