

## FLIGHTS

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The nature photographer tells us: insects look like twigs; moths look like tree bark; butterflies look like dead leaves; owls look like broken tree branches; the least bittern, when threatened, transforms its lower body into the shape of a nest, and its head becomes like a reed that sprouts up behind the nest. There are many things barely seen in the forest.

Darwin says the world's first essays can be found in birds linking sounds and scratching trails in the dirt. Adorno's essay on essays is like a nest, a collection of small things, piled at angles, slowly forming a circle, or circling into a form. Eventually one figures out where to sit, but it's not too comfortable, only a temporary resting spot, a place from which to leap.

Birds invented the essay and are utterly peripheral; they evolved to occupy the periphery of the planet itself. They like some things and people too, but mostly fly away. What causes the bird on my fire escape to suddenly lift off to the fire escape across the street, rest for thirty seconds, then come back? Survey? Boredom? Spiritual conflict?

Plato said poets have ideas like an aviary has birds; ie, they do not have them; birds fly; birds are escape artists. Emily Dickinson said "Split the Lark—and you'll find the Music." Dickinson got half her ideas from birds.

My neighbor keeps pigeons. You could not say he owns them; however, they do return to him every night and he locks them in a coop. Where is the poetry there? If not in the aviary, maybe in the moment the door opens. Adorno might say this is why we need essays, to escape this discourse.

stills from "NuSuB6: Birds," w Tara Nelson