



The Birds You Don't See

They're jittery in oblivion,
the birds you don't see.

You know they're there,
sometimes, pecking dents

in the elements.
Still they elude you,

they are like that,
lurk in recesses

of patterns, bulking only
when you turn your back.

Twin swans in a flourish
of wrought iron,

carnival of detail lining
the cloak. You missed them

entirely, you who think
you know, as

they watched you pad around,
plucked and naked.

Some scattered
when they saw you coming.

Some were drummed by
rain into rooms

of wood and reed and earth
you'll never move in.

Some were the other halves
of birds you did see,

each secret wing and eye
a koan, a coin

that fell from your pocket.
Some are flying back

to places you
have never been, or that you left,

persistent in a world of holes
you cannot enter.

Some exist mainly
in imagination: harpies harrying

your picnic, the birds from other planets,
wearily winging toward you through space.

How numerous they are. Their presence
comforts you. Their absence.

They animate the unseen
in shadow.