

excerpt from *city lights make them sing when they should sleep*  
in *les Oiseaux Sauvages de Detroit* [SF page 1 of 3]

**june 30 Birds of Necessity or Joy but probably both:**

(for Mr. Mike and Mrs. Eleanor)

We hung our laundry—and theirs—in Mrs. Eleanor's yard.

I, surely barefoot on the grass and concrete

and maybe shirtless too,

a wild girl of summer,

would slip between the sheets and under pillow cases,

dampness ever decreasing,

freshness ever increasing.

When the wind blew,

you could run under the sheets too.

Inside Mrs. Eleanor's yard were Mr. Mike's cucumbers

growing on the fence.

If they fruited into our yard we could pick them,

but fruits on either side were passed over the fence anyway

depending on who needed what,

who was cooking,

where we were eating.

Inside Mrs. Eleanor's yard was Mr. Mike's garage

a dark and magical structure

where we kept our bikes

and findings from the alley became gifts:

a pogo stick,

two scooters

—one red and one blue, I think, both repaired for use on the front sidewalk—

bicycles,

a rotund blue vinyl chair became a go-cart seat,

tent poles fitted with a notched coffee can became the pear picker

for the tree in our yard

one on top of the other

higher

and higher

until, quivering,

the prize was cut at the stem with the notch in the can

then lowered

one tent pole at a time

and paper grocery bags full of pears

were passed over the fence.

Do gulls and terns

slice the air and skim the water

because they must

or because they can?

Does the oriole

wear that fabulous orange shirt

because that's the only one he has?

Would it be any less fabulous?

**july 18:** night hawk in a hot still night

**july 30:** her name is Little Bird

**august 5 ghetto birds (wazo sovage d'ghetto):**

the sound is rolling stones, beatles, and motown—

all in french on the radio just a mile and a river away from canada.

the scene is a narrow street

parked full on both sides and a woman with a cigarette

and a pink shower cap

who pulls out and doesn't budge.

i am late

and thirty-five, not twenty-four,

so i roll my eyes and the car back into the intersection and change my course

away from the chene park concert now mixing through the open car windows

with tiiii-i-iii-iiiiime is on my side in french.

birds always catch my eye,

so i swing my head to my upper left peripheral vision to see a gull gliding over

with a sausage in its bill.

**august 8:** hawks are not color blind; cardinals are just macho

**august 11:** goldfinches on thistle: a delicate affair

**august 17:** The ovenbird stays all summer.

**september 1:** our geese like our people cross the street slowly

**september 5:**

silent formation

of cormorants slips behind

fog over river