

## [ A Window Akin To A Screen ]

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Here's a window. An option / to enter or leave. A boundary between there and here. A means to understand. A frame and a mediator.

Today, stuck inside for one reason or another, the window presents a slow movie. I trust that it's in real time and I feel fine staring. The show is mediated by pane and frame not far from binoculars or pixel counts or my smudged glasses, none of them a true vision. In this view, I decide the plotline but the actors are agents of their own missions. I spy and they fly, or twitch or hide. Slowly birdwatching, I'm not going to the park or forest preserve or birdcam or #birdsofinstagram, just sitting here in front of the window.

Some men like to hold up a hierarchy of types of birdwatching. They profess that those with high end binoculars and cameras are at the top, and us watching through windows or via screens at the bottom. I'd like to level that out. It's all for the birds.

Regardless, there's a bit of a learning curve for looking. Look up and back down, from far and close again, trying to get the object in focus. Exercise the eyes. Squint quick, then eyelids wide open. Focus here, now here, now there. The bird jumps and flies and doesn't obey your rules, which makes gazing difficult. You thought you knew how to see but you have to look again. Looking again, you have to give credit to the object for being an individual, giving you a challenge. Looking again, there's a lot of feeling in the seeing.

If good binoculars weren't so expensive, I'd be seeing exactly what the falcon had for dinner. If I had good binoculars, I could tell apart the male and female nuthatches or young and old starlings. But the skies outdoors are so vast, and my little binoculars keep fogging up. The window's got a stain on the outside and I'm three floors up.

So I turn to a different mediator, this one not to zoom in but to zoom out. From Chicago I can watch the Ospreys and Kakapos and Shoebills. I watch the 4k uploads of pet birds I feel too reserved about to ever have. I can log onto facebook and watch Mother Eagle feed her babies over and over.

Lately, my mother has been birdwatching from her windows. She keeps her nest comfortable for the family just like the finches and sapsuckers do this spring. She looks and looks again, from inside to the out, a space remains. A space of appreciation and fascination. There's much to learn without having to get in their way, kindness in the distance still allowing for kinmaking. When seeing too much or when seeing *is* too much, my mother closes her eyes and tells me about Mother Eagle. She often gives me updates on the eggs, on the mates, and on the wind as if the egg hatching, mate finding, and wind were all happening to her. About ten thousand people check in on this Mother Eagle every day, about half of them returning viewers, my mother clearly not the only remote *carer*. Regardless, Mother Eagle and my mother are *making kin*.

Through the window, I see chickadees while my mother watches Mother Eagle online. Without making any physical journey, we're both birdwatching. The two screens present us with limits: reminders to back off and reminders that there's more out there. We've learned what our sights have to offer, how to read the subjects, how to see.

Birdwatching online brings about a variety of birds that's tough to get on foot. Through my window, even with fancy binoculars, I'll never see Ms. Stiletto; she's a specialty of the digital world. A powerful image of poor proportions, she signifies a lot: the feminine, the neglected, the ordinary, the disregarded, the invisible. Outdoors, the pigeons have no frame, no glass mediators, no comment threads of support. Offline, the usual male, industrial gaze that gets to her is one with murder in mind: "kill the flying rat."

Looking out the window, closer and longer, I see more than before. and i'll see even more when a bird meme or video is shared across the internet to me. Glass in windows, screens, binoculars, or my eyewear mediate my sight but have nothing on the feeling.

Seeing helps me build care across kinds. I see it happening constantly in my mother, whether she sees memes, news, or her yard. My own viewing nest includes the capacity for kindness to stranger birds and respect for even the challenging ones. This comes from looking, looking again. Emotions connecting bodies, the joy of looking makes the birds and me kin.

