

What Gould's Magpie Has Stolen

NELL SMITH

For its feathers, the prism of light
that broke its blacks into iridescence.

For its perch, a faded oak branch
that no one would notice, if not for the bird.

For its hunger, the sensation of being watched
so that those below may move without care.

Its silent illusion of safety is the reason
we do not see a fraction
of what we walk beneath.



Magpie (*Pica caudata*) by John Gould (180ca4-1881). Courtesy of the New York Public Library Digital Collections.