

Remember, words are your life boats, your conveyances.
Kindling words, load-bearing words.
Chameleon, ambisexual words. Build your bridges
across the voids with words. Maintain them
with words. Be ready to fight
anything coming between you and what you build.

Each word has a root, a stem to lift it, a calyx
of connotation holding petals posing as truth.
And some are the real thing. Words sail every sea,
stream and sewer. Words walk the city after midnight,
hustle through Harlem, hobble down Wall Street.
I thread Brooklyn Bridge cables with them, strung
with shreds of starlight, riverlight, peoplelight.
Words merge with wind, pluck the superstructure's harp.
Words orbit earth, gather inventive cosmic dust,
settle in cellars, sift into a lost cat's fur
and wait. Words are all a poet can own, but first
they have to be rescued, warmed, persuaded
to be heard, forget the damage done to them.

Does that excite you? Good, but beware
unreined exhuberance. It teeters high on a narrow rail
above emptiness unable to break your fall.

--Glenna Holloway