

Cross-Purposes

What I am is *built*: concrete and steel.
I defy gravity. I am what every athlete
wants: to remain at the apex of the leap,
up in the air. And yet I am useful, too:
5 cars, trucks, people, even trains
make their way across my broad back.
Swallows and ospreys¹ nest in my trusses.

*What I am is motion. I am water, and I am older
than anything else you know. No human
10 built me. I am gravity's best friend; I pool
and flow wherever gravity takes me.
I am the blood flowing in the runner's chest,
and I catch everything: from the hills,
the mountains. It all washes down through me.*

15 What you are is an *accident*,
what happens to rain when rain gives in
to Earth's gravitational pull.
You are some tears dribbling from a mountain's
eye, running down the pavements
20 of small towns, into the cities, to the sea.
You are the path of least resistance.

*What I am is power. You, of course,
have none: you are a static lump, an artifact
slowly decaying. But my regal flow
25 nourishes grasses, permits empires to rise.
Those who made you will break you,
in time, replacing you with yet another
clumsy structure. I have seen. I know.*

"Clumsy"? Being rebuilt makes me
30 a friend of time, does it not? And it means
that I have siblings—those "clumsy" structures,
my sisters and brothers.
We stitch across the rip you make.
We are steel thread to the human needle.
35 We bind you up. We sew you.

¹ospreys: large birds

*And I sow into you; in every cranny
of your superstructure my vapors cling.
They bring out your softness, your rust.
Boast your best, and boast better yet.
40 I am listening to the bright hum
of the wind in your wires. Because I am,
above all else, patient. I will wait for you.*