

A Bird and the River

A tiny bird floats on its back
as if at home upon the stream
that bears it swiftly past the pontoon's
piers and struts towards the sea.

The fledgeling's rosebud feet
are furled, its eyes closed; keel
bone uppermost; serrated wings
a casket cradling the downy breast;
heart and silent throat at rest,
the body weightless, eluent
upon the tidal pulse and ebb,
offered to flight's element.

How intricately made this frame,
how fine the tender arc of breast—
unblemished plumage dry,
the pinions curved symmetric as a lyre;
a natural canoe, the neat, beaked
crown a prow to brave the flux—
the river vast and treacherous;
the rite of passage effortless.

A human body cast into the spate
would not possess this grace:
only such a small, winged craft
can navigate the current's haste—
composed amid turbidity, serene in death:
concrete on the brink of its abstractedness.

JENA WOODHOUSE