

## Fixing the Footbridge in Dykstra Park

Classy guys, these short barrel-chested  
middle-aged Spanish construction workers.  
All day they've shagged their skinny butts  
and wonderful faces—some real schnozzes  
among them—replacing bad wood  
in a narrow bridge over the Green River.

Festive in orange vests with white safety bars  
on the backs and silver hard hats emblazoned  
with American flags, they are industrious  
as dwarves in an old Scottish fairytale; true  
gentlemen, compadres from somewhere  
near Barcelona. Courtly, precise, no nonsense  
among them, not a swear word or rude tattoo.

Up and down they go in their yellow cage,  
knocking bolts from wood so rotten it crumbles  
like old bread, using hand signals to communicate  
as baseball players do. *Team* players. And oh,  
their equipment! Shiny wrenches long  
as your arm, sledge hammers  
heavy enough to ring anybody's bell.

A blue forklift the size of a small building,  
silver cable coiled thick as the driver's waist.  
A yellow crane holds up the entire swinging weight  
of the bridge, some 60,000 pounds pressure,  
they tell me; a smaller one wrestles old beams  
out and new ones in—a ticklish business.

At any moment they could lose the whole thing  
into the river— the beautiful hard-hatted men  
in the yellow cage left swinging through nothing,  
the water dark green below, sluggish  
as the mind of a bigot or a shark.

But—predictable miracle—the tower rights  
itself, the straps tighten, the bolts go in easy  
as toothpicks through jello, and the bad instant  
passes. You know it by the subtle shift  
of their shoulders, the joint buttless swagger,  
that bravura air.