

## Matthew in the Pool

You yell for me to let you swim to me,  
Your tone exuberant – assured, before  
You even ask, that I'll assent to you.

And, pushing from the side, you kick your way  
Beneath the surface, with your feet your sole  
Propulsion, as you've not yet learnt your hands.

The way you rear your head each time for air,  
Eyes wide, a-gasp, still not quite certain of  
Yourself – then plunging underneath again.

'Til, joyously, you wrap your arms and legs  
Around me, you exultant – and my hug  
Responsive, pressing your wet cheek to lips.

I sensing in this moment that you'll soon  
Grow confident, your strokes outpacing mine.

The Groomsman

*Luke 14:7-11*

I hold this photo of my wedding feast,  
You seated, at my bride's request, at my  
Left hand, so that amid our relatives  
You'll feel yourself less like a misplaced beast.  
The one groomsman not of my family –  
Arm-linked with my kid sister you walked down  
The aisle – now voicing your discomfort at  
Your place of honor 'mid our panoply.  
Until I mention how, in *Luke*, the Lord  
Advised his listeners to take the lowest  
Seats as dinner guests, and not the best,  
So that they might be noticed at the board  
By hosts who'd usher them up from below –  
As you've been honored here, among the rest.

### At the AP Reading

This one week of the year we're gathered for  
The summer AP reading, buzzing round  
The Starbucks stations, fighting for caffeine,  
And gathered at our tables, necks bent, here  
Meticulously marking, hour by hour,  
Invariably we begin complaining  
By the fifth day how we're worker bees,  
Our leaders whip-crackers – monotony!

Except that, as someone remarks, we've only  
Come here for a week, and that we're treated  
Like prized pets – our stimulants; our air-  
Conditioning; our bounteous buffet lines;  
The ample exits lining walls (this no  
Triangle Shirtwaist Factory) – and we're  
Reminded that we are white-collar workers,  
First-Worlders for whom this belies the norm.

## Old Faithful

This boardwalk where a multitude's gathered,  
 I hearing languages not heard in years  
 And ones that are familiar to my ears,  
 And we are gathered here as families,  
 With fathers shouldering their children,  
 As hand-clasped couples, singles – pilgrims all.  
 Some rev'rent, others giddy, chattering –  
 Like Chaucer's band, a mixed frivolity and awe.

Before us lies the subject of our quest,  
 It perilous and scalding, cordoned off  
 By rails that keep us safe. It pours a steady  
 Head of steam that lets us know it lives,  
 While each false spurt of boiling water brings  
 Excited murmurs, shouts and cameras –  
 And voices laughing, saying "Old Unfaithful,"  
 Commenting on how wouldn't it be great  
 If we could boast that we were there when it  
 Gave out, when what had been dependable  
 Was so no longer, when the jig was up.

But now the moment's come, the spume shoots up,  
 It climbing ever higher in its bright  
 Increase, its hoary-headed Joviality,  
 Its Neptunish, its Zeusian potency.  
 And ev'ryone's a-gape, our cam'ras snapping,  
 Shouting, hoisting kids again in wonder –  
 And where's the cynic now? the doubter?  
 They're changed this instant (some still obstinate).

The froth dies down, and we disband, some with  
 A quiet joy, while others chatter vibrantly,  
 Affirming in our ecstasy that we  
 Were not resigned, that we still longed for this.

## Estate Sale

Newly arrived and settled in this town,  
And seeking furnishings for our new home,  
We've stumbled on forsaken luxury -  
Have entered someone else's domicile.  
We stray from room to room and riffle through  
Belongings – cast-off clothing sprawled on beds  
(the random undergarments; evening clothes);  
Used toiletries and family photos  
(to be taken for their frames – the memories discarded);  
Book-shelves ransacked; furniture  
Which we here hoist and carry brazenly  
Out widespread doors to waiting getaways.

And this exchange of money seems a pittance  
To the privacy that we've infringed on –  
It like a parable in which a man's snatched  
From his overflowing barns, his home, his bed  
And ushered into what's hereafter,  
While strangers parcel out what he's accrued.