

## **Matt Dennison -- Two Poems**

### **Father Swarath**

As the grandson of a man whose family  
left Germany for Latvia then sailed  
to America when he was twenty, slipped  
through Ellis Island with name unscathed,  
who learned English in the small-town  
streets of Indiana and admired my grandmother  
for twelve straight days before marriage;  
who raised chickens and six children during  
the Great Depression and refused, through pride,  
to sell my uncle's wheelbarrows door to door  
and died of a stroke after driving himself  
seven miles to the hospital one-sided  
and mute, I suddenly realized while  
listening to Beethoven on the day  
my last aunt died, I must have blood uncles,  
cousins, good swarthy Swaraths all,  
who lived and may still live actual lives  
with beer and sausages, music and jobs,  
dreams of wealth or at least a car  
and perhaps a child or two, all with  
or without women of various Germanic  
dimensions and who goose-stepped madly  
or were gassed, and I part Jew.

## Failure

Angles about him sensed, the first,  
the free web presents, and he waits.

No, of course he does not wait, he  
simply *is*: spider, small beyond time,

so small you might not see him  
if you were to enter the room,

would only say *Ah!* and begin  
to sweep furiously. And still

you might miss him, ready, if not  
waiting, to do his job: place

that which is softer and smaller  
than he inside his spider belly.

But you do not come, the door

does not open. The air does not

flow with its one-percent chance  
of blowing the soft, the small,

his way. He weakens. *What bad luck  
to be born!* What cursed bad luck

to boil from that hot-paper sack  
with brothers and sisters parachuting

to corners, walls and floor—though  
we are only concerned with the one

slowly cooling, here, in this room.

After a rather extended and varied second childhood in New Orleans, **Matt Dennison**'s work has appeared in *Rattle*, *Bayou Magazine*, *Redivider*, *Natural Bridge*, *The Spoon River Poetry Review* and *Cider Press Review*, among others. He has also made videos with poetry videographers [Michael Dickes](#), [Swoon](#), and [Marie Craven](#).