

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](#).