

# Breakdown

by Marsha Mathews

At Super Saver Motel,  
my small daughters & I climb the steps,  
juggle luggage,  
Styrofoam ice chest,  
two stuffed pigs with eyelashes,  
torn grocery bag  
a fistful of alternator belts  
we've gathered along the way.  
I fumble, yet manage to unlock the door.

Within minutes, the girls dazzle me  
in their pink Minnie Mouse swimsuits.  
They yank my arms, pull me up from the chair,  
shake from my lap  
the phone book  
open to "Auto Repair." It flops  
to the floor, a yellow swarm.

At the pool,  
troubles float.  
I sit back and forget  
Our U-Haul trailer,  
everything we own  
that wasn't his  
in the weeds beside the Interstate.

Here, against the mountains,  
damp-haired daughters hula.  
Around their tiny waists,  
thin black belts spin, stop, spin—

*DRA Comment: Marsha Mathews, who teaches at Dalton (Georgia) State, has been widely published and her book, "Kidnapping Mary" was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She was also nominated for Georgia Author of the Year. I love this poem for what it says about the love of family, and how that love can overcome the obstacles we face every day. Troubles can disappear in small doses if we will let them. Mathews, who earned her PhD at Florida State (where David Bottoms also attended), also earned a degree in divinity and served as a Methodist minister in Appalachia before returning to academia.*