

Ballet in the Locker Room

Jenny McBride, Douglas

for the girls of the Glacier Swim Club

They stride into the public pool locker room
carrying violins and saxophones
they will practice
sometime between the team work-out
and a weeknight bedtime.

In the shower after finishing my laps
their eyes trace my body with apprehension:
“Is that what I’m going to look like someday?”
My tongue itches to tell them,
“Only if you’re lucky enough to make 56.
“Not everyone gets this far”
But instead I say,
“Stop staring at me or I’ll tell the coach
“you’re just in here goofing off,”
which I would never do
but it makes them laugh
and they stop staring.

But they need something to do
while they shower
so, it’s on to ballet!
Second position, third position, fourth position,
tender bare feet jumping juxtaposed
on a wet tile floor,
swift and sure, no slip or slide,
and now I’m laughing
to think what would happen if I tried that,
how many of them it would take
to unsplay me.

Some kind of physics experiment
follows the ballet,
filling swim caps with water
then dumping them, refilling,
overfilling.



I fit a brand new pair of goggles
and finally the girls are ready
to take the pool by storm.
They race across the surface of the water
like salmon upstream, no stopping them.

In a few years
they will negotiate a perilous channel
but right now they are marvelously incapable
of consenting to second class citizenship.

right: Martin Strand, K'wach, Fly Me to the Moon