

*Debra Marquart*

## BUOY

And so you came to realize that a married man  
is like a drowning victim, when you find him

drenched, adrift and unhappy in the vast ocean  
of his marriage. And you are always the first

to spot him, a floating speck on the horizon,  
flapping his arms for rescue, desperate mouth

ringing an *o* above the rolling crests and waves.  
You on the high dry deck of the cruise ship

in your espadrilles and crisp white shorts,  
aren't you the beacon, aren't you the life preserver.

And when you jump into the sea salt foam,  
if only for a refreshing swim, you understand

that he will seize upon you, strong buoyant  
swimmer that you are, grab your shoulders,

pull your head under with his weight, so dense  
in the water. And down among the reefs

and coral, with your new copper-coin eyes,  
you will see then how he rides on the shoulders

of his water-breathing sea horse wife,  
and his mermaid mistresses, those water nymph

former lovers, and whole tag-team pyramid  
of three-breasted women who have tried

over the years to save him. Even then,  
next time, when you see another one

go under, does it give you pause,  
does it stop you from jumping in—

no, not once, not ever.