

## Swimming Lesson

It's the midday pre-school free slot.

My swimming lesson begins.

I slip into the water like a raw egg  
about to be poached, wishing

I'd stayed in my shell.

But the water's warm, comforting.

My instructor stands at the side  
observes my straining neck,  
the inability to breathe. Water  
is the amniotic sac, a velvety shawl  
slung to cradle – or choke.

My mad mother pushed her fear  
of water down me, like the food  
she force fed, pinching my nostrils,  
terror gagging in my throat.

But the water's warm and he is as patient  
as a midwife. Latex clothed crones  
cackle their wrinkly encouragement,  
as I draw in breath, arms stretched high,  
then glide, head down like an arrow,  
eyes open beneath the water,  
where sun light flickers its patterns  
on the white tiles and in the deep blue:  
silence, peace.