

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.