

Mary G. Parham

Swimming with My Daughters

I'm lurching into menopause;
my daughters meanwhile start their first periods.
Our bodies are obsessed with bleeding and breeding.
Some of us are drying out, some flooding red.
I sweat and plod and my girls rage and rush,
all servants of the same ancient master.

They used to dress up in my hats and heels;
now they imitate me and my mothers
in a much more serious game,
that game no woman sits out.

So we're all three in there now, swimming hard
through a heavy green sea of ova.
Sometimes we sink and gasp, but
our uteruses fill with air and float us up
like air bladders inside fish.

My youngest daughter stands on the shore
playing keep-away with the long-fingered waves
that grab at her teasing feet.
Her small hand rises to wave,
her high thin voice ripples out to us:
"Wait for me! I want to go, too."
Her lifetime's million eggs already squirm urgently within her,
dear child. I call to her, wave her back to land:
"Put on your life jacket, sweetie, and rest up."