

## Swimming Lesson

Day Camp turned unpleasant at  
Swimming lessons, stinging chlorine,  
Dreaded disrobing, hurried moment  
Of public nakedness, shiver of water,  
my inability to shed the white necklace  
of beginners, the urge to silence the  
exuberance of the counselor, each forced  
“atta boy, you can do it” enlarging the  
image of my hands around his submerged  
neck watching his face turn the color of  
tongue, the eyes of the six red necklaced  
boys standing above my splashing limbs,  
dripping superiority, inundating my efforts.  
If I had remembered the reason for my trouble  
I could not have said it. My brother did not  
know how to swim, at age eight, on that  
day he fell into a lake and drowned.

—Ray Lovett, MSW