

'Swimming Home'

Johanna Boal

I didn't want to wear a bikini
For practical reasons;
A swimming costume, jumping
In white, green, blue waves, 3-4 times as big as me,
Voices screaming, giggling made me feel safe.
All the time my back turned, ignoring
The Burren limestone hills of Fanore.

Running to and from sharp stones, razor blades
Testing sea edge, wondering the smell of wood and salt?
And Atlantic too cold, in Easter school holidays.
I hear the cries of my brother's voice and Seagulls
Encouraging me to swim,
A shipwreck half submerged
Deep enough to dive

The river bank with its nettles, long grasses,
Pushing the oar as it sinks in to wet mud
Splashes on borrowed older sister's anorak
To row back! To get it over with!
But I liked the Heron swooping,
Can't see rocks, lovely placid whirlpools
And birds of prey were they watching me?