

The Night Divers

Each night we dropped quarters for each other
into the shaking green light of the hotel pool,
testing our mettle and our lungs in the still

scary plunge into the deep end. Less than an hour
from closing, we were often the only swimmers
in this abandoned world, all other children

out on the teeming boardwalk, appended
to a parent's hand, or already bathed, pajama'd,
lulled in the laugh track of a sitcom, struggling

to stay awake through a flickering blue hypnosis.
My sister and I were proud rebels in our contrary
allegiance to this chlorine-scented center

of the earth, ringed by balconies draped in bright
beach towels, forsaken by those who chose
to confine their holidays to sunlight and hubbub.

If far-off we could hear the bells and cries
of Funland or the shrieks of teenagers chasing
the selves they were becoming faster than they knew,

that ruckus could be swallowed and expunged
by one dive into the water where bubbles
and our heartbeats were the only sounds that lasted.

I have no memory of being watched, though I suppose
we were. What has stayed with me all these years later
is only our two bodies, pushing, kicking, again and again,

toward a bottom that was lit and well-marked, and then,
the quick pivot, the surge for air that we never doubted
would be awaiting us when we returned for it.