

Into the Swims – or She's Leaving Home

Martyn Crucefix

A remarkable thing has happened in our house this week. My daughter's room has been tidied – and it has remained that way.

The duvet is unrumpled on the bed. A phone charger remains thoughtfully unplugged on the floor beside the bed. The pages of Donna Tartt's *The Little Friend* have not been turned any further. The few coins on the desk wait to be spent. No rubbish is accumulating in the plastic bin beside the desk. A laundry basket has been emptied and seems not to be refilling as it usually does. There are few clothes hanging in the wardrobe. The door stands open onto the landing for days on end. There is hardly a movement in the wave-shaped mirror beside which, vertically, a friend wrote in pencil "Don't crack the mirror". Actually, to be truthful, there is the slightest of motions to be seen there – it's me standing in the centre of the room, staring around.

We took her to university last weekend. We miss her. And in the absence of more detailed news we're pretty sure she's having a good time. She's never friended us on Facebook but she somehow did so ages ago with my parents. So we hear remotely about smiling pictures, roseate cheeks in flashlight, black backdrops. I think yesterday she was supposed to be attending her first dissection (I remember that vividly).

In the meantime, to wish her well and permit myself some lovely sentimental thoughts of her in younger days, I thought I'd share an older piece I wrote which she is featured.

The following poem originally appeared in *Hurt* (Enitharmon, 2010). It derives from a walk we pursued when she was about five, I think. By walk I mean, she walked a bit and I carried her on my shoulders the rest of the way. This was probably in the hills near Sedbergh – sheep country, close-cropped grass, heather, little stony paths. I suspect we plotted a waterfall or two into the route for a few squares of chocolate (temptation) for her and her older brother.