
GETTING YOUR PERIOD AT THE WATER PARK

MARGARET RAY

Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia

All the ways your girlfriends would jump to shield you.
All that unquestioning equation of blood with shame.
All the way back to your locker for quarters
 to buy a tampon from the restroom vending machine.
All the time spent worrying *what if someone saw the stain*
 while you rinsed your bathing suit at the sink,
 a towel wrapped around your waist.
All the reasons you weren't supposed to buy
 a white bathing suit in the first place
 even though it *made you look tan*.
 Central Florida in the 90s, and you, the sponge:
all your unexamined absorption of what white America
 called beauty.
All the ways white adjustment of skin-tone has always been
 about money:
all that powder on European women in the eighteenth century:
 their indoor-skin.
 Then twentieth-century foxes: white-skin-made-dark
 by the sun and free time,
all those surfing movies,
all the ways to make leisure show up in the body.
 But you hadn't recognized this water yet,
 back there in the bathroom, and you said

all right, let me finish erasing the damning evidence,
 you knew better than to let anyone see
all the leaks in your body. You were supposed to let the world
 dye your body, but to be very careful
 not to let your body stain the world.
All day long, the worry. And
all the years after. And
all your mistakes. And
all the ways this water pins us down, over and over.
 And all the ways to drown.