

## Tom Laughlin

### Night Swimming at Lake Waban

Nearly full dark now  
the winding road ends  
and I pull in to park in the dirt  
before feeling the thick grass  
my bare feet choose  
beside the path  
that curves around an ancient stone building  
Approaching the water, I smell pipe smoke  
and know I will not be alone tonight  
The lake is still

and so too is the old pipe smoker  
the stone he sits upon  
and his fishing pole  
pointing out over water's edge  
the line disappearing into dusky light  
and dark reflections  
I hear the New England accent as we greet  
and start down irregular steps of stone  
set carefully by fellow swimmers years ago  
"I hope I don't scare your fish," I say aloud.

Careful to avoid the invisible fishing line, I step slowly forward  
deeper along rock then sandy bottom,  
the water welcoming and smooth,  
heading away from the fisherman's line  
out now and out and out across the darkness  
"Scare the fish in to shore," he calls to me  
from the pitch-black shore trees  
I have left behind  
to become a lone bobber  
in a universe of stars

**Tom Laughlin** is a professor at Middlesex Community College in Massachusetts where he teaches creative writing, literature, and composition courses. He was a founding editor of *Vortex*, a literary journal of Massasoit Community College, and a volunteer staff reader for ten years at *Ploughshares*. His poetry has appeared in *Green Mountains Review*, *Ibbetson Street*, *North Essex Review*, *Dead River Review* and other smaller journals and magazines.