

Into This World

The pressure of his head, pushing
centimetre by centimetre down
the birth canal brings tears of
pain, of joy, of anticipation.

My boy will be wrenched
from his safe harbour to face
a world that does not want
to greet him, wrenched

from his watery hidey hole where
no gruff hands could drag him
by the scruff of the neck, stomp
his head to the ground, throw

him into the back of a police
cruiser. My boy will arrive momentarily,
screaming in unison with the protestors.
He'll be weighed and measured, pricked

and prodded, foot-printed and tagged,
his band matching the one on my wrist,
the one that says he belongs to me.
He will always belong to me, not

to nurses who will swaddle him tightly,
coo soothing sounds, not to doctors who
will listen to his heart, give the okay to
leave, not to the streets where he will ride

a tricycle, where one day, brothers will provoke
him to throw that rock, hurl that bottle, tell
him to drop out, dope up, it don't matter.
The pressure of this boy speeding into an intolerant

world makes me want to stop pushing, suck him
back up into that deflated cocoon and hold my breath,
hold him safe, until I can promise him a kinder
world, a fairer chance, a just tomorrow.

Just a tomorrow.

MARY O'KEEFE BRADY