PELVIC FLOOR EXERCISES

It's taboo, womanspeak, they never induct you into the club until you are pregnant. Their secret password

INCONTINENCE
plastered onto toilet walls in maternity hospitals confirms your fears

God must be a man no woman could be so cruel.

With other novices you sit in waiting rooms where they bombard you with the regime in leaflets, on video screens until it's distilled in your nightmares. You're on a first name basis when you go to classes and hear the instructor say

as she clenches her fist

\textit{lift two three four five} her hand opens

\textit{let go and relax} two three four five and clenches again

\textit{and lift}

sweat beads on pink faces but no-one is moving a muscle at least not any that you can see. Friends share their little tricks

\textit{stick a red spot on your fridge}
\textit{and do five every time you see it fifteen for red traffic lights}

and the class where they talk of stopping a lift at five different floors almost gives you a hernia.
After the birth
they say
pretend you are holding
a diamond
squeeze tight
don't let it drop
and it's hard not to laugh
knowing a basket ball
could slip the hoop
without even scraping the sides.
You learn to clench
for a sneeze or a cough
and swell the ranks
of women who exercise daily
and wonder why
they didn't start you earlier
along with those films
they showed you
at school.

PEEL

Avocados
are like eggs
to peel, sometimes
the skin lifts off in sheets
like snake-skin, sometimes it
flakes off, like dandruff, requires
picking off in minute pieces or gouging
out like a wood-carving and whether it's
worth the effort depends on how it's
baked, too little sun leaves it waxy,
too much leaves a mush, it needs
to be cooked to perfection
just like eggs.