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Child Resting on Her Desk

Anne Marie Macari

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When you lay your head on the desk you hear a riot in the wood—air sucked down a hollow hall and crows calling. In that long passage built by sound there’s no sleep, only one door after another, and noises threatening to burst in, not into the world of the wooden desk with its irregular heart-beat, but the world of the room and its children. You hold your head above the scarred plank so that the clamor in the wood hardly reaches you, so visions won’t be afraid to find you, your neck twisted and your fist bunched under your hair, you can’t say what’s coming, something beyond milk, something your left hand curled into position and etching out its first sounds can’t hear yet—biting your cheek, the smell of the pencil still on your fingers. And while you try to ignore the scuffing feet under the desks, you see that part of you is not a child at all, part of you is something besides a person, a floating blanket above the child’s cramped body, still waiting even when the teacher claps her hands to revive the class so when you lift your head the blanketing-self brushes your face, you are waiting to become, you’ll wait as long as you have to, shell to feather, ink to utterance, the body beyond the body, beyond
the body, pulling you, clumsy and tripping,
leading you through membranes of self,
filmy home you can’t see like inside
the leafy head of a huge tree
you keep climbing, branch after branch,
twigs somehow keeping you aloft,
and how you learn to step on them without
looking, as if you really knew the way.