

Child Resting on Her Desk

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.