Where the Tiny Things Are: Feathered Essays

Nicole Walker

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Microencephaly

When Zoe was almost two her pediatrician made her have an MRI to see what kind of encephaly was happening inside her head. How much foot down can you put when the doctor measures her head circumference to be a 110 percent of normal? Can you say “I know she’s fine” because you know she’s fine without sounding like you doth protest too much? What if you’re wrong (even though you know you’re not) and her brain pushes against the already-large circumference of a skull like a flooding river against a high-built dam? So you give in and let them lay her down on the table. You let them put the cotton balls on her eyes. You let them fire up the magnets and let rays happen against her head like the sun happens against the planet and look what you get? An image of the world all inside her head. Birds sheltering squirrels hiding under owls inside trees cutting out canoes on top of fjords shadowing granite slab and then flower burst after flower burst inside of which of course seed then lettuce then tomato a whole salad for a brain. The world is best protected nestled inside itself like matryoshka dolls and her head is big, yes, but also large and expansive, and if there’s anyone I would entrust, and I mean “en” to read “in,” it is my large-headed daughter who woke up from the anesthesia and wanted to get the hell out of there.

My son and husband and daughter each host huge heads. They make fun of me for my smaller-sized head which I say is not that small,
and I tease back saying I hope you don’t tip over, top-heavy, planet-sized-head-riddled babies. I put hat upon hat upon them and they never do fit.

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