

Dream Research

the year my son perched on the cusp
between grade eight and high school,
he graduated from sharing his thoughts
to single word responses

fine or sure

I worked in a sleep lab that summer
balancing his swimming lessons and day camp
with my own all-night endurance

one night he helped me stick electrodes
to the heads of the sleepers
then I bound him at the cerebral cortex,
hypothalamus and suprachiasmatic nerve

I tucked him into the unfamiliar bed
and plugged his wires into the sleep box
how are you? I asked

in the blue underwater light of the control room
I gazed into the computer screens
the way an aquarium visitor
peers at the unfettered flight
of aquatic creatures

he dove deep into slow theta
and I closed my eyes remembering
when he would roll over dreaming,
a seal pup in my belly,
the two of us umbilical connected

later he floated up into REM
the styli recording his dreams in frantic scribbles
like scribes in a marketplace
writing a language I could no longer translate

and when I opened my eyes
moments later I watched the dot
swimming across the graph
in search of open water

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