

AFTER LUNCH

**REBECCA
BAGGETT**

They are dead now, those women
who in their middle or older age read to us
after lunch from *Mr. Popper's Penguins*,
The Wizard of Oz, *The Yearling* –
their voices rising and falling
while we rested, heads lowered onto arms
folded on top of our desks,
sunlight flickering through the scrim
of our half-closed lashes. The teachers
are dead, and so are some of the children,
and so are those classrooms,
with their blackboards and their lazy
golden air with its haze of chalk dust,
the wooden desks with their nicks
and gouges, their inked initials,
and the peaceful half hour after lunch
when we bowed our heads
on our arms and pretended to sleep,
straining to hear the twig snap,
the fawn draw near.