

## A Story I Didn't Tell

The drillers came  
with their giant machine  
that dug and dug  
and beat and beat,  
the sound went on  
for hours that day  
but fifty, sixty, ninety feet  
and the well was dry.

I did not say  
my husband was out—  
out of our house,  
our woods, our town,  
out of touch and on his own  
the way he would be  
on other days  
as the men carried on  
and the well was dry.

All I did was sit  
at the window  
or stand on the porch,  
bring glasses of lemonade  
out to the men,  
tell my two-year-old son  
why the pounding went on  
day after day,  
more and more feet  
and the beat beat beat  
we couldn't escape,  
the well still dry.

My husband came back  
and the years went on  
and our son grew up  
and the woods grew tall  
and my husband left  
again and again  
my husband left  
and I moved away  
but the pounding came  
in my chest and my mind  
and the well, the well,  
the well stayed dry.

## **Meditation for the Silence of Morning**

I wake myself imagining the shape  
of the day and where I will find

myself within it. Language does not  
often live in that shape,

but sentences survive somehow  
through the islands of dark matter,

the negative space often more important  
than the positive.

Imagine finding you look at the world  
completely different upon waking one day

And not knowing if this version is permanent.  
Anything can change, after all,

for how else would you find yourself  
in this predicament or this opportunity,

depending on the frame? A single moment  
can make loneliness seem frighteningly new.

We destroy the paths of rivers  
to make room for the sea.

Adam Clay

## **Michiko Dead**

He manages like somebody carrying a box  
that is too heavy, first with his arms  
underneath. When their strength gives out,  
he moves the hands forward, hooking them  
on the corners, pulling the weight against  
his chest. He moves his thumbs slightly  
when the fingers begin to tire, and it makes  
different muscles take over. Afterward,  
he carries it on his shoulder, until the blood  
drains out of the arm that is stretched up  
to steady the box and the arm goes numb. But now  
the man can hold underneath again, so that  
he can go on without ever putting the box down.

Jack Gilbert

**When They know**

for H., who tested positive

“The man sitting next to me just disappeared,” said one passenger.  
News item, February 25, 1989

We are talking about the plane:  
the nine who followed the fuselage,  
the sky which sucked them up lit by the jet's parts going up,  
debris storming the hole—  
the three hundred and forty-six who remained,  
firmly buckled in their seats,  
bolted to the floor, fused  
to the wings and frame.

And it is not surprising that I think mostly of  
the three hundred and forty-six:  
their lives gleaming ahead of them,  
some of them turning to religion, others finally able to love,  
how they will continue belting themselves  
into their seats, as if it keeps them safe,  
how they will think there is some reason they survived—

while you can't stop thinking about the nine:  
those few randomly plucked from their lives,  
radiance hurtling into dark—  
you are with them in that instant,  
just when they know they are leaving.

Ruth L. Schwartz