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.

Andrea Hollander
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,
derbris 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