Tahlequah I

Beneath the northern stars, on the Salish Sea,

a mother orca circles with her daughter,

lifting her infant to the air, that she

might breathe again. This baby, born to water,

lived only minutes and has not drawn breath

for days, yet still, yet still her grieving mother

will not let go, cannot accept her death.

This is a mother’s vigil like no other,

one day for each month of her pregnancy,

a thousand-mile wake, a tour of grief,

a crying out for us to feel, to see,

to act at last on our inmost belief.

Oh Tahlequah, whose name is like the water,

we must do this for you and for your daughter.

Deborah Bachels Schmidt