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The Management of Hope

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The Management of Hope

Brianna Young

A DEPARTMENT HONORS THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AT TRINITY UNIVERSITY IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION WITH DEPARTMENTAL HONORS.

7 April 2010

Thesis Advisor

Department Chair

Associate Vice President
for
Academic Affairs

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Other:

The Management of Hope

Written by Brianna Young

Advised by Jenny Browne

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Introduction

As a writer, I am interested in the different poetic forms that can move, change, or even stop time for a reader. In particular, the forms of haiku, prose poems, and haibun. Haiku halts time by focusing on image. Prose poems ground the reader in specific narrative moments. The haibun construction brings together both haiku and prose poems. Even the personal essay, which is another form I explore in my thesis, manipulates time, interweaving the past and present. Each of these forms creates pauses within my thesis, within the natural rhythms of time. As a result, I have structured my work into four “seasonal” sections. This four-season structure allows the poetic forms to change or stop time, while the overall collection still moves forward in a linear progression. Thus, the arc of the thesis creates a subtle continuity, a framework, for the shifts between genre, form, and content.

* * *

Haiku.

The traditional English haiku’s 5-7-5 syllabic structure creates imagistic poems focusing on the natural world. Renowned poet, translator, and editor Robert Hass, states of haiku:

If the first level of a haiku is its location in nature, its second is almost always implicit Buddhist reflection on nature. One of the striking differences

between Christian and Buddhist thought is that in the Christian sense of things, nature is fallen, and in the Buddhist sense it isn't.¹

While I recognize this distinction, *my* haiku exists within the Christian belief of a fallen world that hopes for the day of complete restoration for all of humanity. I also disrupt tradition by using broken haiku, deconstructing the 17-syllable structure, as well as extended haiku that creates a fuller image through multiple haiku stanzas. In all cases, however, the haiku remains grounded in the natural world.

Haibun.

After tiring of professional poetry, the haiku master Matsuo Bashō followed the Japanese tradition of pilgrimage. During that time he wrote “travel journals, mixtures of verse and prose.”¹ Also known as haibun, his writings are notes on wandering, detailing daily life. The prose remains grounded in what he sees, while the haiku, or verse, reestablishes a new way of seeing the world around him. Following Bashō, the haibun presented in my thesis evoke an internal pilgrimage of my own, resulting in combinations of prose and verse that see the beauty and lyric moments within the demands of daily life.

Prose Poems.

Poetry in prose creates unique and detailed vignettes. The elimination of line breaks removes the temporary halts that create music or meaning in regular verse poetry. Yet, even without line breaks, poetic prose moves in expected poetic and lyric leaps. These

¹ Robert Hass, ed., *The Essential Haiku*, trans. Robert Hass (Hopewell: The Ecco Press, 1994).

come together to create transcendent moments of existing. So while adopting the organic shape of a narrative, prose poetry also explores the wonder of the fantastic, and of the miraculous, discovered in everyday life.

The Essay.

The personal essay narrates the thought process of the writer in relation to a person, place or event. These types of essays are written out of a writer's personal experiences, an attempt at understanding why something, or someone, holds so deep a meaning. The essayist writes to see how unrelated experiences connect, exploring the reasons for an emotion they do not understand. Yet, there is no guarantee of finding a resolution. There is, however, hope.

Winter

Winter is death's season, the state when the natural world transforms itself from a place of light into a place of darkness. Yet, in my thesis, the season of "Winter" does not personify death. Rather, the work included here grapples with finding new and living language to articulate despair.

When I began writing this collection, just months after a sudden death unsettled my life, I thought the entirety of my thesis would consider grief and brokenness. I expected to write poems of darkness, but I never really succeeded. Instead, there came, surprisingly, poems of light. The poem "Haiku, a trio" exemplifies the struggle of understanding death. Yet, the final stanza evokes the continuance of life, the ability of metaphor to comprehend the incomprehensible, and the possibility of something more powerful than despair. So on one level, this thesis *is* about death, because it is where it began. However, death has also taught me to see hope.

For example, "Haiku, February" tackles the language of loss through extended images of broken birch trees and dragonflies. Perhaps these particulars form an uncommon language of grief. Yet I also see this piece as a confession, an exploration, a hypothesis, the interweaving of the natural world, and even the unreality of reality. It shows the ability of language and metaphor to bring new understanding amidst the chaos of loss.

Seeing death taught me to look harder for light, even in winter, and that the world exists in difficult dualities. One way I explore such dualities is by juxtaposing oppositional flashes of sensory details, like fireflies in mason jars becoming a shy funeral pyre. Such an aesthetic combines the delicate constructions of the world, giving words to death and a look beyond despair.

Haiku, February

For Lara

February has
turned to spring and the birch trees
are still broken (I

dream pale umbrella
leaves that shelter dragonflies
pacing the tree trunks

in a feverish
heat). I'm relieved it is not
my own loss. They say

happiness is in
the small things, like dreams and mint
leaves and seeing you.

But instead (am I
ashamed?) I live not having
lost what has left you.

Point: a response

There is no space wider than that of grief,
there is no universe like that which bleeds.

- Pablo Neruda

I found these lines scribbled on a newspaper in a coffee shop, scrawled just above the front-page headline, like someone had absentmindedly written them there to remember something they knew they'd forget. I brushed a thumb over the words, smearing them into a point. They seemed to have been written just for me.

I turn the page into a paper airplane,
send it across the sea and watch the darkness bleed
into the horizon.

Dusk

Dusk drapes its lovely
hand across my brow, smoothing
deep, furrowed wrinkles

into seamless thoughts
of existing, until all
I see are tiny

fire flies in mason
jars, shrouded in netting, a
shy funeral pyre.

The Mexican Convent

hides below itself
a lightless labyrinth and
resounding echoes.

Mint Leaves

I breathe into your mouth, and you whisper back into mine how the mint leaves taste like toothpaste. All I taste is the naked and rough edges of the leaf, pulling at the back of my throat, the pulp now in the crevice of my molars as I try grinding out the flavor. The tip of my tongue works it out, and I am reminded of herbs and dirt and pesticides. I put another leaf into my mouth, an attempt at sobriety I think. We chew the mint together, me making faces and you washing it down, sipping your whisky-diet coke. I sober up seeing you seeing me and escape with my bag of mint leaves out into the garden

to replant all that's
been taken, with rock altars
to forget the dead.

Haiku, a trio

The distance between
death is smaller than you think
(I have grown mangoes

in my yard for such
times as these!) so instead I
write poetry; and

the wasp chews haiku,
spitting them out, making his
nest amongst the eaves.

vagabundo em Lisboa

For Audrey

Lisboa means
further away than you
or I could ever imagine.

Or,
maybe it is where
you will find language, sitting
on a stone wall surrounded by a halo
of sun so white it blinds blue sky.

(Remember,
how you and Calla sang along
to the *Sound of Music*?
I watched it on home video
and I want to see again
the light your eyes can hold).

Lisboa means
farther than my legs
will carry me, faded
eras of mosaic tiles, flowers
I cannot name. If
you see a butterfly, think
of me.

How do they remove
the trees there?
Is it with a machine, or branch
by branch?

Spring

For me, this season, both literally and on the page, reflects the “holy now” of the present moment in simple, living vignettes. Each poem shapes the transition from despair to hope, of coming to see the world as it is, and then learning to look beyond it. I write to discover how to feel about what I have observed, like sunlight and trains, butterflies and sangria, realizing all things conflict and converge. Ultimately, growing more comfortable with such contradictions.

One haiku, “Dachau,” captures the slow restoration of a concentration camp, and the stillness within me following the emotional turmoil of having just walked through its crematorium. Coming out into the sunshine, and seeing that poplar trees still line the place where the barracks once were, I realized the explicit contradiction of such beauty amidst death. Yet here they are, joined in the holy now.

It is a “now” made of distance & intimacy, the domestic & the exotic, of connections & disconnections, the active & the passive, life & death, the ideal & physical world, of speech & silences, of stillness & of motion, and light & darkness. These dualities are at play throughout my thesis, a two-sided backbone.

The idea of “Spring” emotes healing, of something being made new again. And again I find myself turning to the visible natural world to describe the interiority of humanity, and how both are simultaneously being broken and being redeemed. In short, my work begins with a learning how to see, and then grows into learning from that seeing.

Train Station in Tavira

Sunlight through a train station. Stillness
as a young woman sleeps
then wakes with
a start, raising
her head from
a stranger's shoulder. She feigns *forgive me*
and blushes, all the while falling
in love with the cleft
chin and crooked smile. *Hello*
he says and forgets
about missing
his train, and watches
her hair glimmer
sunlight.

Illuminant

The world flickers on
and off, like a dying light
bulb. The beauty of

night is in those things
that are illuminated.

And with each crack in

the sky there appears
an outline of the apple
tree, whose harvest lies

fermenting and
melting
into the earth.

Mangoes

I am feeling up the mangoes when you walk by at the supermarket: el supermercado. When we leave, my hair smelling of smoky earth, hints of garlic, you're holding my bag of groceries, pretending it's too heavy for such a little lady. Our noses full of fresh flautas and flour tortillas.

And the old Mexican sits outside selling paletas each summer day, and I converse with him in my meager Spanish. He nods and smiles bright rubbery gums. I believe it now that sugar will rot the teeth. Or maybe it is the mysteries of the magic paletas that make them disappear altogether. And the mangoes in my bag have ripened.

Remember the mango salsa? How you sliced your finger and the mango nectar congealed the blood flow, until you sucked them both out. And you tried describing the convergence of copper and mangoes into the infinite expansion of a universe, while I tried speaking Spanish back to you. Nuestra historia del amor será como el mango.

Platja d'Aro

It takes one hundred stone steps to reach the crescent moon beaches of Platja d'Aro. Without white waves and a bright, dry sun, the barefooted girl walks among the red rocks that separate the beaches, finding pieces of broken pottery.

The yellow and blue and white painted shards not fitting together, she imagines the woman who came down at dawn with her wedding plates and with calculated anger took them one by one and threw them onto the rocks to watch them erupt. Then the woman walked into the ocean and through the sunrise, transforming herself into a mermaid. Recollecting all the broken pieces, gluing them back together with her saliva.

The girl holds them, feeling their points with her thumbs. Then, she throws each one back out into the ocean, where the waves at noon sparkle lost glitter, and they disappear like they had never been. She turns and walks back to the beach, over the rocks, onto the sand, again counting 1 2 3.

Haibun of Lonely Butterflies

We drank the pitcher of sangria real slow, talking as our shadows watched flamenco dancers echo our conversation. Their hips swaying in the empty bar until the empty sangria pitcher sent us back out into the streets, where no one dances and everyone sleeps. But I cannot sleep, even when the rain falls hard on the roof of the house like a should-be lullaby. Instead, it only makes me weep.

There is a butterfly
migration. They move flitting
- and flying - through the streets.

The Porch

We sit on my front stoop watching the earth become a blurry shadow of dusk, and the haze of your cigar smoke smells like something I remember. Strawberries plucked off the vine, in the heat before April showers. The scent sits in my hair, your clothes. Embers fall to the ground, alight, beating red like hearts, withering away to ash.

And in our silence, as we sit beneath the moon hanging yellow and full, I want to tell you secrets. But my hesitation deepens, until language is lost and my longings remain. You look over and offer a consolatory puff of your cigar, my voice becoming the embers.

Dachau

The smell of death and
poplar trees lovely in the
white sunshine of spring.

Summer

Late one morning, sitting with a friend in our favorite taco shop, I came to the conclusion that my collection must be about hope. As stated before, I thought I would be writing on darkness and despair, on how to manage grief. Yet, through the months of writing this poetry and prose, I slowly began seeing the world in a brighter light. I started wondering, how do I manage this light, this hope?

“Summer” is a possible answer, erupting in a montage of sensory moments, creating conversations, giving language to something as intangible as hope. In “Haibun” the boy and girl, although physically distant, create an intimacy in a phone call, sharing the Ozarks and haiku. Yet, these things still feel strangely distant within the poem. The haiku following the prose elevates the plots emotional resonance from simple poetic narrative into an internal expression of the speaker. The birch tree – which is assumed broken for its need to be mended – has changed and is no longer what it once was. This transformation connotes a felt understanding of the broken being made whole.

Thus, in the end, it is the management of hope that needs tending and supervision here in these poetic forms. Dualities are the foundation of how we view the world, and portray life’s constant flux of energies. Without motion, we do not understand stillness. Beauty is irrelevant without the distasteful. Death shows us what it means to live. Without brokenness there is nothing to restore; and knowing despair directs us upwards, towards hope. For without hope we are lost at sea, in a wooden rowboat, slowly sinking beneath the waves.

Haiku, a quartet

A response to Robert Hass

Butterflies at dusk;
their wings an intricacy
of human longings.

And Hass would say: *Death*
is the mother of beauty.

Did the butterfly

die deep inside the
cocoon? Did it suddenly
awaken to light,

surprised by its own
beauty? (I want to eat its
tiny, beating heart).

Explode

For the Clements

Did your belly button explode? The child asks the new mother, his hand pressing upon her thigh as he stretches to stare at the quivering baby in her arms. *Will a baby explode from her belly button one day?* He again questions how life begins. The mother smiles and thinks how the garden outside her window, past tidy window boxes, must have birthed from the earth's belly button. Wild & thick, more weeds than virtue, we explode.

Haibun

It is effortless, the way our laughs bounce off each other through the telephone wire. I listen to the sound of your voice (the one thing I haven't heard in months) and wonder at how easily I am myself.

We talk past midnight, me stringing a broken haiku together, you talking about climbing rocks in the Ozarks; *what else does Arkansas have to offer?* It's past midnight when you say, good night see you soon. I can't help smiling as I wander the dark house (cleaning the kitchen counters at 2am) thinking this is what it must feel like to fall in love with you.

The truth is the birch mended
itself into a willow tree
– touching the waters edge real slow

Haiku, summer

and in summer, as
one might expect, the bulrush
rose wild & savage

Tea Leaves

I twirl the empty
teacup three times and upturn
it there upon its

saucer, waiting for
its contents to tell me what
I will be. Lifting

the cup, looking at
the conspiring tealeaves, and
I suddenly think

how the bright, white ring
around the moon, *and getting
a kitten to track*

*down the mice in my
kitchen*, are what is and what
will be...

The Red Bicycle

The red bicycle
kisses a tire to the cracks
of the white stone bridge.

The old poet reads
Coleridge to his granddaughter,
and begins to tell

her the truths of Frost
at Midnight, though he knows she
won't yet understand.

Without a child she
cannot fathom sitting in
silence with herself

to pick a part the
universe, while her little
one sleeps until dawn.

For Johanna

The rain fell faster than our feet could dance and so we danced until our feet were cold. Then she told me she wanted to get married in the rain, and I laughed to imagine her in white wedding dress, golden curls stuck to face uplifted. And her eyes would be closed as she smiled up into the sheet metal sky, her arms outreaching. I would notice the groom's eyes watching her in wonderment, as her soul unfurled itself into ribbons of silk, woven by a thousand caterpillars.

Solitary leaf,
just out of reach. I called it
back but it flew on.

Broadway Junction

The J train wanders its way from Jamaica Station through old Brooklyn. I am reading my father's letters, written and mailed to my mother the year they spent apart; there are stacks of them tied up in rubber bands in attic boxes. He writes of nothing and of everything. I am embarrassed to read such intimacies, yet cannot stop thinking that this is how she fell in love with him. I step off the train, wait for another. I am reading *running this morning I thought of you* when I look up to the wind snatching the paper from between my fingers. The page dances there, above the clamoring A train swaying by, a still, white shadow that catches the sunlight flickering from between the car windows. It floats up, and then drops off behind the last car, landing softly, slowly, between the tracks.

Haibun, Hope

On some mornings I sit at El M with my café con leche, talking in my meager Spanish to the Mexican waitresses about the weather and my heart. They half-listen, nodding their dark heads, pursing dark lips. So I order breakfast tacos instead, two papas y huevos, por favor (with avocado). The daily crossword in front of me, and my pen on 35 Across: the distance between what we have and what we desire?

The flowers are in
a Patron bottle, on my
table; daffodils?

A plane writing in
curling smoke out the window?
One yellow balloon?

Hallelujah

Behind the house, where marigolds bloom and the grass grows high in summer, there is a broken swing, hanging limp, held up by one rusted chain. The other coiled like a red garden snake on the ground. You can see this through the kitchen window, four-paned and foggy where sun slants onto the wooden table in late afternoon highlighting the chiseled indentations left by years of a forks' stabbings.

The child gets out of bed after his afternoon nap and wanders, dragging blanket across planked hardwood, through the house and into the kitchen; his mother stands barefoot, washing dishes and humming happiness. He rubs his left ear and then folds it down into itself for comfort, while she sings hallelujah hallelujah.

Fall

Finally, this collection gathers language, memory, and observations like a harvester collecting bales of hay. It shifts between free verse, haiku, haibun and prose poems, moving between autobiographical and imaginative scenes. You may want to ask me, what is true? Did you ever sit in sunlight at a train station in Tavira? Have you danced in the rain? Or read your father's love letters on your way through Brooklyn? But the tenuous line between fact and fiction will always be blurred in poetry. It is not about which moments are "real," but about recognizing that language itself creates a new reality, a deeper truth.

This seasonal section, "Fall," has only one poem and a longer piece of prose, the personal essay. Fall represents transformation, a change, and the transition from one period of time to another. The personal essay exists as the crux of this season, not only occurring in the fall, but also expressing the season itself.

The essay combines the autobiographical and imaginative, as well as narrative and lyrical strategies, creating something effectually "true." The truth, then, comes from the fact that these events have happened, and are still happening even as I write. The essay rests between my knowable past and my nostalgia for a future that has yet to happen. Thus, I write between two time periods, the first being a present tense trip to New Jersey with my father when I was 13, and the other on how I have viewed Jersey throughout my 21 years. It is a conversation with myself, a discovering of how a place has changed, and how I have changed along with it.

Bottles

My father maneuvers the rental car over onto the shoulder of the two-lane road, which has just winded through hillsides of ancient trees taking us into the outskirts of Hackettstown, New Jersey. I pop open my door and step out, noticing how the sun breaks to pieces on the ground, the branches up above a type of earthy kaleidoscope.

He hands me a pair of oversized work gloves from the trunk; I pull them on, and then reach to grab my blue handled, three-pronged trowel. Standing there as my father adjusts a tight knit hat over his baldness and brown hair, I inhale autumn. He slams the trunk closed, and looks over at me with a smile “Ready?” I nod yes, giddy with excitement for our afternoon of finding old dumps, digging up antique bottles. We cross the road and slide through metal bars of a latched gate that reads “Road Closed.” Walking along, the trees unfurl their bright leaves like peacocks and I watch the wind flutter them off and away. My father veers towards the tree line, leading me into the woods; my feet slip over leaves, tangled in dead branches.

I have the wide eyes of a 13-year-old ready to experience only what I’ve heard in stories. I am all too willing to believe my father’s tall tales. As a result I have grown up wanting to have adventures of my own, hoping that maybe, one day, if perhaps I could inhabit such a place as this, I will have stories to tell my own children. I breathe ribbons of silver; *what are we even looking for?*

* * *

When I was eight years old I knew exactly what I wanted to be when I grew up. There were only two scenarios, and I even wrote them down in my pink diary, labeled on the lined page “1” and “2.” One: I wanted to be on the Women’s Olympic Soccer Team. Two: I wanted to live in New Jersey, be a mom, and own a Beagle. I had visions of a clapboard house with hardwood floors and a deep basement. A house with a porch, a fireplace, and woods extending out past the backyard where my children would roam, finding old Indian arrowheads and building tree forts. That was the “after” of my “happily ever after” fairytale. I had my life planned out, and it was what I imagined my happiness consisting of.

By the time I was 15, a year after my family moved to Long Island, New York, I caught on that New Jersey was considered the armpit of America. There was no specific instant or place or person that brought me to this conclusion. It is a general attitude on Long Island that New Yorkers are far superior to people from Jersey. The glamour of The City pervades the atmosphere of New York and its boroughs, condemning the neighbor across the river as home to Atlantic City, the Mafia, and billows of factory smoke. Jersey was transformed, the more I drove through on my way to elsewhere, from the paradise my father had described into a place of malls, concrete medians with no U turns, and the only Chick-Fil-A in the Tri-state area. New Jersey was for women whose husbands commuted daily into the City, but who couldn’t handle living in New York. The longer I lived on Long Island the more I became bitter towards this image of Jersey, which piled up like the rotting leaves layering the Jersey woods. Yet still, some part of me held on to my childhood vision. I lived with two perceptions of Jersey that didn’t quite fit together.

* * *

Deep in the woods of Jersey, my father turns around and begins explaining to my 13 year old self: “You see, these *dumps*, they’re just holes where people used to throw out their trash.” He leans down towards me as he speaks, his eyes lighting up, like always when he relishes telling me something. “They would dig ‘em a few feet deep, make sure they were far enough away from the house. They would just throw all these bottles away.” He begins staring at an imaginary bottle in his hands, fingers clutching air. “*Hundreds* of them! Growing up, me and JoJo would be out messing around and we’d come across these *old* dumps, and we would find whole *troves* of bottles.” He looks up quick from his hands and smiles, but I can see his mind is far away, picking out old ink wells from the ground with this older brother George, bringing them home by the armful, laying them out like a peace offering before their antique savvy mother.

There is a method to determining the age of an antique bottle. My father used to take his off the bookshelf, point to the seam and the top of each, teaching me their value. If there is a seam along the side, and it runs all the way up through the lip, the bottle is made from a glass mold. If there is a seam that does not continue up the lip, then those bottles were molded but the tops were set separately. The oldest type of bottle, and most rare, is a bottle without any seams. These bottles were hand blown, the bases thick and uneven. There are air pockets within the walls, and the lips are blown independently and melded on later. I would run my finger along the seam of one, noticing how he was right – it stopped just at the lip.

All the trees begin looking the same as we walk on, and then it is simply enough to be out there, just my dad and me. I revel in the unifying feature of tree bark, and if I pass by too close the bark pulls on my sweatshirt. I no longer register the constant *shwish shwish* of hiking through sharp dry leaves, crumbling them with each step I take. Up ahead of me, I watch my father duck beneath growing branches that stick out from solid tree trunks, using his hand as a shield to protect his face.

We come across a stone house with its roof caved in, the frame of thick wooden beams hanging at diagonals. The front door rots on its hinges, and the few windows are open holes of broken glass, while ivy nestles its way into every seam. It astounds me, this place. Like the whole of the earth has forgotten it exists. I imagine what it might take to fix it up; but like the earth, the house remained in limbo between the dead and the dying. My father takes out his camera. I stand there smiling in a red sweatshirt, my short curly hair sticking out of a blue knit hat, not knowing my eyes are still slightly big for my thin face. I wear the work gloves and hold my trowel, the house in the background, and the trees all around.

We continue on, walking parallel to a chain-linked fence covered in bracken, seeing a field out beyond it, realizing how close and how far we are from reality. My father takes a left off from the fence, and I keep following his tracks, his footsteps. The woods become denser, and I step lightly, thinking how I love fall and wishing the afternoon would last forever.

“Here it is,” Dad says. I circle from behind him as he begins to rifle back the leaves, clearing them out to expose a hole about five feet deep, bottles sticking out of the strata. This hole of trash is the most beautiful thing I’d ever seen. Once the area is cleared of moldering leaves, we see shards of glass littered everywhere. Enraptured, I slide on my backside down the hole, using my trowel to break away clumps of dirt from the earthen wall, where the glass bottles are entombed. Up above my father picks up an old sign about a foot wide, brushes it off with his gloves, and hands it down to me. The worn red metal is engraved, partly rusted on the back. I nod for him to keep it, and give it back to him. We work for a while as the afternoon wears on, and then finally pack up and head back towards the road.

* * *

A few years ago, home from college for the holidays, I came across the picture of me in front of the stone house. I found it in one of my boxes in the attic, and I stared amazed at who I used to be. In the box, too, were the metal sign and an antique inkwell I had excavated on the trip. The bottle’s seam extends up past the lip, and looking at the bottle in the winter light of the one attic window, I realized disappointment. Back then it had been the thrill of the hunt, of being in Jersey and chipping away at the semi-solid ground. But now, suddenly, I lost faith that old, seamless bottles still exist someplace beneath the earth. The New Jersey of my father’s youth, the one I had dreamed of, no longer could be found with a trowel. I had imagined so many possibilities, walking through those woods with my father that autumn afternoon. There had been no doubt I would return, raise children, and

own a Beagle. I had proudly displayed the inkwell on my shelf until we moved to Long Island, where the bottle remained packed in a box in the attic, buried this time under stuffed animals and old books. I forgot about it, letting it softly come to rest in the brown paper packing. Only later, while searching for something else, had I come across the inkwell. I sat on the attic floor beside the box, overflowing with my life since that trip with my father, and thought how all I had really found at that dump were shards of broken glass, a few seam-wrought bottles choked up with dirt, nothing like I had imagined.

Now at 21 years old I am a girl who has no idea what her life might be. Contrary to what I imagined, I will not be an Olympian, just a collegiate athlete whose 15-year career ended one momentous November evening, after 110 minutes of play and a few unlucky penalty kicks. Now, almost done with college, I walk longingly across the soccer field on cold, humid nights and I remember the Jersey woods and the crisp, seasoned air that tastes like cinnamon. I stop at the midline of the field and I feel how soft the ground is, here in San Antonio, and the leaves are soggy and grey under my feet. I think too of how growing up I figured I would be getting married after I graduated from college, simply believing that was the way it worked. And I can't help but smile and shake my head up at the largest moon I've ever seen, thinking that I have never even been kissed.

So I must take the broken pieces of a bottle, and rearrange them to fit back together. It will not be seamless, the way I once supposed. Though, still, on some desperate nights I dream of gold medals, or a wedding. And then I find myself wondering if the woods near Hackettstown are still growing tall, adding rings with each year. And if the old dumps, hid

under decades of dirt and rotting leaves, have disappeared. Or, if they are still there, forgotten and alone, awaiting my return.

* * *

The sun has drawn itself down nearer the horizon, and the tree's shadows fall long and exaggerated. We make our way back through the woods, towards the car. The air has turned on us, coming in colder and clearer, but soon I notice up ahead the familiar fence with the Road Closed sign. I turn for a last look at the fading glory of that place. In the car, the heat going, I pull off the gloves and tuck them with the trowel near my feet. We turn around and drive off, back towards Hackettstown. The trees at dusk melt together, receding behind us into obscure shapes of ever after.

Haiku, Jersey

I sit with my pen
at the kitchen counter in
the early mornings

and hear the faucet
drip a story my dad once
told about finding

old coins in Jersey,
underneath oak trees. Then, in
the fall he took me

to those woods, where leaves
of red fell off the trees. I
want to sew them back

together with my
pen. My ink drips along with
the faucet, telling

me the old bottles
we dug up are more than glass
and seams. They're unearthed

*What is opposite
of a burial?*

remnants – elegies
praising the whole, heralding
a resurrection.