

## After the Funeral

After the funeral I descend  
the dusted stairs, suffocating  
in damp; dark notes of yeast;  
light fall of berries -  
hands filled with the mustard-stain  
of devilled eggs.  
Cheek stuffed with  
creamed memories of bakeapple  
tart.

In dim light, stoppered vats  
stand,  
clay soldiers: decaying  
cloy. The air tastes of crock-potted  
funeral  
food.

Ratted pages of the beam-tacked  
calendar rattle as my shoulder  
passes,  
telling the story of this too long  
ferment:  
Waiting and wasting, my  
grandfather's wine.

Tears consumed by the constant  
press  
of cap to bottle, we built a tower  
of blue-tinged reds and aged-lace  
whites.  
The ache in my shoulders,  
and heaviness in my arms  
held my sorrow apart  
for an afternoon.  
In the kitchen, steam of moose-stew  
soaking  
our skin, we face the gemmed  
bottles.

Some, like seagulls at shell-strewn  
tide,  
swooped and  
stole away.  
I quietly rocked three bottles into  
my arms, swaddled and snaked  
them away  
for their backpacked journey.

Home.

Each future occasion earmarked by  
bottle:  
one for mourning; celebrating;  
proclamation.  
But plans fall apart like berries  
in the sun.

Grieving betrayal, I drained the  
tears  
from one.  
After moving across an ocean's  
current, I discovered another -  
shattered and bleeding.  
The other is lost to moments  
unforged.

The waste of them, like unspilled  
tears,  
lies heavy across my shoulders.  
There comes a dusky memory of  
that basement  
those squat brown bottles with the  
crimp-on tops  
made for celebration and  
abandonment  
like all the days between the  
moments of our lives.